



**COUNSELS**  
**TO YOUNG LADIES**  
*Who Have Completed Their*  
*EDUCATION*

MADAME DE LAVALLE'S

BEQUEST:

COUNSELS TO YOUNG LADIES,

WHO HAVE COMPLETED THEIR EDUCATION.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FOURTH FRENCH EDITION

BY A SISTER OF ST. JOSEPH.

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## APPROBATION.

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We, JOHN PAUL FRANCIS FELIX MARY LYONNET, by the grace of God, and the authority of the Holy Apostolic See, Bishop of Valence.

Now that the second edition of *Le Livre des Jeunes Filles*, or *Advice to Young Ladies who have completed their Education*, by Mme. M . . . , Directress of a religious educational establishment, is about to appear, we renew the approbation we have already given the work. We rejoice at the success obtained by this book, inspired by true piety, and tender affection for youth, in which the lessons of experience are exposed with talent, and in a simple and attractive style. We again recommend it as a book most interesting, and well calculated to form young ladies to virtue.

Given at Valencia, April 15, 1860.

† JOHN PAUL,  
*Bishop of Valence.*



## TO MARY IMMACULATE.

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UNDER thy auspices, O amiable Queen of Heaven, this humble work must appear. From the very moment in which I conceived the design of it, I resolved to consecrate, to dedicate it to thee, as a token of my love and filial piety, and now, in all humility, I beg thee to accept and bless it.

Thou knowest, O sweet Mother, what were my views in undertaking this work. I hoped to do some little good to the children thou dost so dearly cherish, and whose happiness is the object of thy most ardent solicitude. My end shall have been attained, my vigils shall not have been in vain, if, despite its many faults and imperfections, thou wilt, in merciful kindness, deign to cast a favorable glance upon it. The hope that sustained and encouraged me during my labor does not now abandon me. Ah! I know how powerful and generous thou art! From the height of thy celestial throne, thou wilt cast thy maternal eyes upon the humble pages I delight in presenting to thee; thy patronage will assure their success in promoting the salvation of those to whom they are addressed, with a view to

thy glory and that of Jesus, thy Divine Son. Never could I presume to send forth this humble work alone, to accomplish the mission confided to it, but if thy benediction and assistance accompany and follow it, what shall it have to fear? . . . . . Through thee must come the force and efficacy of the counsels given herein; thine must it be to open thy children's hearts to receive them.

My work is accomplished. Thine, O powerful Queen of Heaven, is about to begin. May it render fruitful the feeble seed I have dared to deposit in thy hands; from thy action must it derive its value as well as its fruit.





## TO YOUNG LADIES

WHO HAVE COMPLETED THEIR EDUCATION.

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DEAR CHILDREN:

The precious years of your scholastic lives have flown by; your families have recalled you to their midst; you have bidden adieu to your mistresses, your companions, to those beloved spots, so often the witnesses of your games, your studies, your devotions. . . . . In the hour of separation, what sentiments agitated your heart? What were your thoughts?

Most assuredly you went with happiness to rejoin those beloved parents from whom you had been so long separated. With sincere joy you again beheld the paternal roof, and the well-remembered spots, where, in early childhood, you had received so many caresses; but, at the same time, you could not leave with dry eyes and cold hearts those teachers who had been to you as second mothers. The remembrance of their goodness, their attentions, their pious exhortations; the innocent pleasures of the convent school, the sweet cordiality in which you lived with your companions, the very order and regularity of

the exercises, everything excited your regret, and you crossed the threshold of that second home, in which you had been received, instructed and formed to virtue, filled with sentiments of sadness, which proved your gratitude and goodness of heart.

Ah, dear children, doubtless you then deplored your not having employed to the best of your ability, those years gone by never to return! How bitterly did you reproach yourselves for your negligence in study and labor, your want of docility to your teachers, your little anxiety to form yourselves to virtue, and—who knows?—perhaps, also, your formal acts of idleness, murmuring, indocility, by which you offended God, grieved your mistresses, and disedified your companions!

These regrets, dear children, are just and legitimate. You would show very little sense or judgment did you not experience them. The only means of softening them, of making them useful to you now, is to set about repairing, as far as in your power, the negligences which have given rise to them.

Doubtless, during your stay in school, the vivacity and lightness of your character opposed many obstacles to your progress in good; but now, your judgment and intellect being more developed, you understand more clearly the importance of the lessons you received, and feel all their value; you are grateful to your teachers for having labored to root out of your young hearts the thorns and briars of passion, to implant therein the seed of virtue by solid instruc-

tion and salutary counsels. Now, my dear children, is the time for this precious seed to germinate and bring forth fruit. On yourselves it depends to make the harvest rich and plentiful; good-will and frequent recourse to God in prayer, are the means by which you will operate this inappreciable good.

First, good-will. This is indispensably necessary in order to second grace, which operates nothing in the soul without our participation. To preserve, increase and perfect the love of good, and the virtuous principles you imbibed in the sacred asylum in which you spent your early years, it will, then, be necessary for you to will it truly and effectually. If you have but a faint desire,—if you wish for it to-day and are indifferent to-morrow,—you have not a true and firm will; you have only its shadow, a dream, a phantom which amuses and deceives you, but with which it will be impossible to work out your salvation. In an impulse of fervor St. Thomas's sister once asked him: "What must I do to be saved?" . . . The holy doctor replied: "It is enough to will it."

Second, recourse to God in prayer. My children, you know our Lord has said: "Ask and you shall receive." Have great faith in this promise made by Him who is truth and goodness itself; go to Him as a child to its father, and beg with confidence from His infinite mercy the graces you need to assure the effects of your own good will. Often say to Him with your whole heart: "Lord, I wish to be good

and pious; I wish, at any cost, to serve thee all the days of my life; I wish to work out my salvation despite all obstacles; I wish it, O my God, to-day, to-morrow, and always. Aid me by thy grace, strengthen me against myself, against the world, and the demon, who conspire for my ruin, and I will walk with joy in the way of thy commandments."

Desirous of aiding you, as far as in our power, to persevere in this desire of belonging entirely to God, we have collected, my children, in this little volume, the counsels given you while in school, and the wise regulations suggested for your conduct in your families. Read them from time to time, examine if you follow them, and renew every time to God, in presence of the most holy Virgin and your good angel, your protestation of fidelity in His service.

We doubt not that this little collection, now offered you as a testimony of our affectionate interest and the ardent desire we have of your salvation, will be received by you with pleasure.

May it attain the end we propose to ourselves, and may it contribute to the glory of God in promoting your happiness!





# PART FIRST.

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## DUTIES TO GOD.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### *PRAYER.*

Its necessity.—The example of our Lord, the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.—Particular graces granted a young girl after fervent prayer.

**Y**OU know, dear children, that prayer is an elevation of the soul to God. This holy exercise is, so to say, the key to the heavenly treasures. When we prepare ourselves for prayer, God, on His part, prepares to send upon us the manna of His heavenly graces, and His goodness apportions their measure to our wants and dispositions.

In prayer, the soul should present herself before God as a child before her father, and should, in all simplicity, express the sentiments suitable to her position. Do not fear to importune Him by too frequent solicitations. He is a Father full of goodness, who desires you to have recourse to Him, either to

expose your wants or to bless and thank Him for His benefits. How many motives urge us to frequent prayer! God, by His paternal providence, provides for our wants and preserves our life each day. Is it not, then, just that we, also, render Him daily homage? Are we not continually exposed to temptation and incited to evil? Should not we, then, incessantly implore the aid of our Lord's grace?

There is another consideration which may lead us to understand more fully the necessity of frequent prayer.

You have been told very often, dear children, and with great truth, that as your body requires nourishment for the support of natural and animal life, so also does your soul stand in need of sustenance, to preserve her supernatural life. Were you to pass an entire day without repairing your corporal strength by food, in the evening you would be faint and sick; were you to persist for many days in depriving yourself of nourishment, you would completely lose your strength, and your life would become extinct. Now, this is precisely what would happen your soul were you not to pray, were you to neglect the reading of pious books or the performance of your religious exercises; for this, my children, is the only food that can preserve and increase in your souls the supernatural life,—the life of grace.

Again, dear children, our Saviour has made prayer a formal precept, and has Himself given us the example. How many times did His disciples

behold Him prostrate with His face on the earth, before His Heavenly Father, adoring Him profoundly, and praying with ineffable ardor for man whom He had come to redeem! Retired in some solitary spot, He frequently spent whole nights in this holy exercise.

The Blessed Virgin, also, prayed very much. The angel who announced to her the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, found her absorbed in prayer.

After the example of Jesus and Mary, all the saints have made it their delight to entertain themselves with God. We may be assured that this was the means by which they attained to sanctity, for prayer is the mysterious channel by which God communicates His graces to our souls.

St. Louis, King of France, even during his journeys, assisted at the Divine Office, and heard several Masses every day. Certain courtiers having represented to him that this assiduity in prayer would prevent him from applying himself to the business of the state, the holy King very judiciously replied: "Were I, like many other princes, to spend the greater part of my time in the chase or in play, instead of employing it in prayer, most assuredly no one would reproach me for it."

The venerable Mother Agnes of Jesus, a religious of the Dominican Order, while yet a mere child, was accustomed to pray with the utmost fervor. At first she prayed for a quarter of an hour every day, then for half an hour, then for an hour, and finally,

as she gave herself to it with so much good-will, God rewarded her with such abundant consolations, that she found no delight in anything save prayer.

St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, when only seven years old, had such love for prayer that she consecrated to it several hours each day. She was usually occupied in spinning silk or wool, and she often left her wheel and retired into some secret corner, so as to pray without distraction.

St. Louis Bertrand, when very young, was often found on his knees in some retired part of his father's house, praying with touching fervor.

But there is one Saint who, perhaps, surpassed all others by his fervor in this pious exercise; it is St. Louis de Gonzaga. From the age of four years he seemed never to grow weary of prayer. This fervor, so extraordinary and so edifying, did but increase with his years; he loved prayer as other children love play. He used sometimes to say, that after having tasted the sweets of conversation with God, it is impossible for one to withdraw himself long from it.

See, my children, what was the fervor of the saints. What do you wish to do? . . . Do you expect to sanctify your souls without prayer, or by saying tepid, careless prayers, prayers full of voluntary distraction and dissipation? This would be a gross error. Certainly, no one expects from you prayers as long and multiplied as those of the saints. Alas! your light and volatile minds could not bear such

application. Endeavor, at least, to acquit yourselves, in the best possible way, of the short prayers obligatory on all Christians.

The saints tell us that God has marked out special times in which to bestow on us His graces, but that He generally sheds them on our souls after we have offered Him our prayers. Sometimes, even a short aspiration, uttered with humility and fervor, suffices to touch His heart and render Him favorable to us. A few years ago, a young child had the happiness of experiencing this. I will relate the facts to prove to you that the goodness of God, who formerly manifested Himself so admirably in His saints, would operate as great marvels in us, did we but know how to pray as we should.

The Ursulines of N—— were accustomed to conduct their pensioners on Holy Thursday to visit the Repository, in a village church situated about half a league from their establishment.\* It was a beautiful day in April. The younger pupils, happy at the sight of the glad sunshine which played around their heads and lent an additional charm to the budding beauties of nature, amused themselves as they went along the road. It was their first spring holiday, and they profited well by the liberty given them; some, by chasing the butterflies, others by gathering the violets which grew in clusters in the hedges that bordered the road-side.

\* This was shortly after the Revolution, and many communities of Ursulines had not yet established the cloister, commanded by their constitutions.

Among the latter group was a young girl eleven year old, an orphan almost from her cradle.

Julia (such was the child's name) had received from God gifts more precious than wealth and beauty. She was endowed with an excellent disposition, great intelligence, and lively imagination, tempered by a depth of judgment far beyond her years. Joined with these qualities, there was, however, one great fault; she was supremely proud! . . .

She had been so often praised for her happy memory, her talents, her application to study, the sweetness of her voice, and the gracefulness of her figure and carriage; her first essays in composition, and the neatness with which she kept her books had met with so much commendation, that our little girl esteemed herself, in the secret of her heart, far superior to her companions; and held it as a point of honor to maintain her reputation as an accomplished pupil. Hence she was rarely found in fault, and even when such a thing happened, she shed such abundant tears under the influence of the chagrin she felt, that the good religious, instead of blaming her, were obliged to use every effort to console her.

This deeply-rooted pride and self-esteem led Julia, although so young, to dream for herself a brilliant future, and to promise herself triumphs which her darling passion made appear her sovereign happiness. We could scarcely credit this, did we not know by experience the follies of the imagination. But what are the dreams indulged in by a young mind

imbued with ideas of its own excellence, and which has, as yet, received only applause!

In the meantime, Julia was seriously occupied in preparing for her First Communion. She knew that our Lord sovereignly detests pride, and that He enters with sorrow and reluctance into the heart wherein self-love reigns. She had often felt that her ardor for study, her ambition to satisfy her teachers in everything, to please her companions, and win commendation for herself, were not the effects of Christian humility; hence she had been forced to conclude, that, in reality, she was only a proud girl. Since this discovery, she had felt secretly ashamed of herself, and every day renewed her resolution to correct herself, but her efforts seemed almost fruitless. Every moment the poor child found herself looking for praise, forming in her mind a thousand chimerical projects, seeking, through a motive of vanity, to surpass her companions, and win approbation.

Do not say, dear children, that this was no great fault in a little girl who gave no exterior evidence of her vanity, and who knew how to make herself equally beloved by her companions and her teachers.

On the contrary, it was a very dangerous evil, which would have increased with her years, and later on, would have led to the most fatal results, if God, who has loving designs over all, had not deigned to prevent her by His all-powerful grace.

On the day on which we have seen Julia gathering

violets on her way to the village church, she had had to sustain many conflicts with her predominant passion. Gay and volatile as all children of her age, she, at first, thought only of culling the flowers and inhaling their perfume; when she had made sufficient harvest, she seated herself on the grass, and began to arrange them in a bouquet. Suddenly a thought flashed across her mind, and cast a shadow over her joyous face; it seemed to absorb her completely. She remembered that the violet is the emblem of humility, and that she herself had great need to acquire that virtue, so as to be able to worthily participate in the heavenly banquet. The remembrance of her, hitherto, fruitless efforts to extirpate pride out of her heart, overwhelmed her with sadness, and she exclaimed with bitterness: "I shall never become humble, and I shall make an unworthy First Communion." Burning tears rushed to her eyes, and she remained, for some moments, as if crushed beneath the weight of her poignant grief. But soon, taking courage, she raised her heart to God and cried out: "Lord! I implore thee to grant me the grace of being no longer proud, so that I may worthily receive thee into my heart on the day of my First Communion! Oh! if thou wilt hear me, I will love thee so much!" . . . . .

Her simple and artless prayer was heard by the God who loves and blesses children. Julia became immediately consoled, and felt assured that her most ardent wish would soon be granted. As she was tying her bouquet with a piece of grass, she began to

sing in her sweetest tones, and without premeditation, the following words of a familiar hymn:

“Ah! better than ages in dwellings of mortals,  
One moment we spend with our God and our King.”

At these last words the child's voice died away. She no longer heard earthly sounds, no longer beheld those who surrounded her. What passed within her heart in those moments I know not; she herself could never explain it. All she could tell was, that she experienced, for a moment, what are the delights reserved by God for those who give themselves wholly to Him; that by the aid of the divine light which suddenly illumined the depths of her soul, she clearly perceived the nothingness of creatures, the beauty of eternal things, the emptiness of the riches, pleasures and vanities of the world, and the pure and true happiness which the love of God alone procures; in a word, God had given her an experimental knowledge of the words of the prophet, which she had just sung in the excess of her joy: “One moment spent in thy tabernacles, O my God, is infinitely preferable to ages in the tents of sinners!”

Meanwhile, at a given signal, the merry band of young girls had resumed their walk towards the village church. As they drew near it, they arranged themselves two by two, so as to enter the holy place in good order. Then, for the first time, they missed Julia. Two of her companions returned to seek her, and found her still seated on the spot where she had

arranged her bouquet. Aroused from her meditation, Julia silently resumed her place. On entering the church, she adored the Blessed Sacrament in the spirit of faith, and still under the impression of extraordinary grace, she murmured with a burning heart those words which were to render stable forever her wandering thoughts and affections: "One moment spent in thy tabernacle, O my God, is preferable to ages in the tents of sinners."

When about to take her departure, Julia laid her little bunch of violets at our Saviour's feet, upon the moss which surrounded the rustic repository; and a few moments later, she resumed her place and the usual routine of her scholastic duties.

A complete transformation had been operated in the thoughts and sentiments of the young girl. Nevertheless, no one but the angels could perceive it, for there was but little to reform in her exterior conduct. She was, as before, docile, industrious, mild and charitable, but how different were the motives that animated her! . . . . .

If it be true, as faith teaches, that God, in rewarding us, considers the sentiments of our hearts, and the end we propose to ourselves in our actions more than the actions themselves, we may judge of the immense difference between Julia, proud and acting only through the impulse of self-love, and Julia, humble, acknowledging her faults and seeking only to please our Lord. That happy change was the fruit of a fervent prayer.

I do not mean to say that the child had no longer

any combat to sustain. Do we not know that the saints, even those most highly favored by God, had to struggle with their passions even to the end? Could it then be possible for Julia to be freed from all temptation? She encountered it very frequently, and, it must be acknowledged, she sometimes fell; but those falls served to maintain her in humility and self-distrust; and her heart fixed on God, was no longer attached to the idols she had formerly worshipped.

A few months after the blessed day on which the divine light had illumined her soul, Julia, for the first time, approached the Eucharistic Banquet. Inebriated with the heavenly consolations God is pleased to shed into the souls He visits, the child repeated again and again, with an accent of inexpressible happiness: "Better is one moment spent in thy courts, O God, than ages in the tabernacles of sinners."

In vain did the world and its allurements endeavor, later on, to smile on this cherished child of the Lord: she felt only contempt for its deceitful offers. And when the glad sunshine of spring-time had caused the violets to blow seven times, from the happy day whereon her pure and fervent prayer had ascended to heaven, the young girl was to be seen kneeling at the foot of the altar, her brow encircled with white roses, the emblem of her consecration to the Spouse of virgins, while in sweet tones she sang with even deeper happiness than in the days of her childhood: "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O

Lord of Hosts! Better is one day in thy courts than thousands in the tabernacles of sinners!"

Twenty years have since glided away, and Julia's happiness is not in the least diminished. She has, without envy, seen the companions of her childhood imbibing deep draughts from the cup of pleasure; she has beheld them pursuing the phantom of enjoyment which they fondly hoped would bring them sovereign happiness. Calm and peaceful in the asylum she has chosen, in the shadow of the tabernacle, she has seen them reaping, after a few short days of illusive happiness, only remorse, bitter chagrin, shame, despair, and death. And, O great God, what a death!

In revealing to a friend this secret of her life, Julia added: "I am far from having been as faithful to our Lord as I should have been, for I have, alas! too many faults to deplore; yet I must say, for the glory of my good Master, that He has always been infinitely generous in my regard, and that for a few slight efforts, a few trifling sacrifices, simple violets which I have offered Him with a good heart, He has bestowed upon me an immense amount of joy and happiness.





## CHAPTER II.

### RULES FOR PRAYING WELL.

Attention—Devotion—Humility—Religious exterior deportment—Unbecoming behavior in Churches—The Turks' respect for their Mosques. Constancy and perseverance in Prayer—Examples.

**W**HEN you wish to pray, banish from your mind all strange thoughts, and observe the following rules:

1st. *Attention.* If you had the honor of being presented to a great prince, would you not speak to him with attention and respect? When you pray, you speak to God, before whom the greatest monarchs are as naught. Think well of what you say; say it not by chance, as it were, without knowing what you say, as is often the case in vocal prayer. Pronounce those prayers slowly; it is better to say a few and say them well.

2d. *Devotion.* This consists in being penetrated with profound sentiments of respect, confidence and love. You pray to a God infinitely great, infinitely powerful, and, at the same time, infinitely good; He is your Father, your best Friend, He loves to see you at His feet, offering Him your homage; His

heart is ready to hear you, and He will infallibly do so, if what you ask be conducive to your salvation. Let it be your happiness to pray to Him, and do so with the utmost confidence.

3d. *Humility.* This condition, dear children, is often wanting in your prayers, and this is, probably, why you are not always heard. It is to be remarked that young persons are much inclined to have too great an esteem for themselves. Those who are not exposed to dangerous occasions do not commit great sins; they, then, believe themselves almost saints, and better than others. Banish this idea, if it has ever entered your mind. Consider the numberless graces you have received, and your abuse of them: this abuse is, perhaps, sufficient to render you very criminal in the sight of God. Sound the depths of your heart: how many vices, how much vanity, self-love, sensuality, neglect, deceit, susceptibility and jealousy you will find there! . . . You commit no enormous sins, but where are your virtues? All your actions, even those which seem good to you, may be very displeasing in God's sight, because of the pride which ordinarily insinuates itself into them. When you go to prayer, acknowledge, then, sincerely before God, your nothingness and misery; humble yourself in his presence; this is an excellent disposition, for inclining his merciful goodness towards you.

4th. *Recollected exterior deportment.* This means ought not to be neglected; it contributes much to respect and interior recollection. As far as possible,

recite your prayers on your knees. When you do not use a book, join your hands and close your eyes. If your health oblige you to sit down, do so according to the rules of modesty. Never, on any account, allow yourself to laugh, talk, or gaze around while you are saying your prayers.

It is particularly in holy places that you should regulate your exterior, so as not to disedify those who pray at the same time with you. Do not imitate those who, in our holy temples, place themselves in a posture of which they would be ashamed before ordinary company.

A young lady, who had been brought up in a Christian manner, entered for the first time the cathedral of one of our southern cities, on a solemn festival. She returned from it extremely disedified by the deportment of the greater number of the ladies, and their want of respect for that holy place. "I knew not," said she, "whether I was in a church or a shop. The gentlemen were walking up and down the aisles, with their arms behind their backs while they conversed aloud. Most of the ladies were lolling back in the seats, talking gayly and turning their heads from side to side. 'Perhaps,' said I to myself, 'when Mass begins, all this noise and scandal will cease, and those ladies will give some signs of piety.' They, in fact, made some show of taking a more pious posture, but they scarcely bent their knee, and remained almost in a sitting attitude. Stooping over, they spread their elbows over the pew in a most unbecoming manner. Their heads,

only half-covered by the small, fashionable hats, were continually moving from side to side, which, with their enormous crinolines, like inflated balloons, gave them a most ridiculous appearance. In all seriousness, I asked the person who accompanied me if those ladies were Christians, for I did not see them recite a single prayer. There were also present a few Sisters of Charity whose countenances and demeanor, breathing only modesty and recollection, formed a striking contrast to the conduct of those ladies." To this picture, (alas! but too faithfully drawn, although there are honorable and numerous exceptions,) I shall oppose what travellers tell us of the respect the Turks show for their mosques.\*

Those infidels are so attentive to their prayers, so modest and composed in their exterior, that they would pass for monks rather than barbarians. They enter their mosques barefoot, with hands joined and eyes cast down; they prostrate themselves with the most profound respect, and, in the time of prayer, no one is ever seen to turn his head aside. It is a crime among them to speak to another; should any one speak to a Mussulman while he is at prayer, he would receive no answer; even were one to be struck, he would not look to see who gave the blow. Ah! how those infidels shall one day put to the blush those Christians who pray with so little attention and respect!"

5th. *Constancy and perseverance.* To pray with

\* The Mahometan temple.

exactitude to-day, and to do quite differently to-morrow; to say only half your prayers at one time, and again omit them altogether; then to begin them again, to leave them off later,—this is not to pray with constancy and perseverance. Never omit your exercises of piety unless it be impossible for you to perform them. Do not give them up through weariness or disgust, for, by permitting this trial in time of prayer, God intends, perhaps, to try your constancy. Doubt not, that if you be faithful, you will one day meet your reward.

St. Monica, during twenty years unceasingly implored the conversion of St. Augustin. A pious person once told me that she had for twenty-five years asked of God a particular grace, and had obtained it only a short time previous. Had Saint Monica and this pious person grown weary of prayer, most probably they should never have obtained the favors they asked.





### CHAPTER III.

#### *DAILY EXERCISES OF PIETY.*

Morning and Night Prayer—Meditation—Examination of Conscience—The Rosary—Graces obtained by reciting the Rosary—Vain pretexts for omitting Prayer.

IT is but just, my children, to give to God the first-fruits of the day. Upon our fidelity in fulfilling this duty depends the spiritual success of our actions, and there would be infinite risk in beginning them without having thanked the Sovereign Creator for the repose of the previous night, and implored the help of His grace for the new day we hold from His mercy.

It is not the less just that we offer Him our thanks at the close of the day, and beg Him to pardon our faults. Death may surprise us during sleep. What a misfortune it would be, my children, were you summoned to appear before the sovereign tribunal, if, after having had the misfortune to offend God, you had gone to sleep without having implored and obtained His forgiveness.

Accustom yourself to say your night prayers before you feel overcome by sleep. In many Christian families they perform this exercise after supper.

Then they converse or recreate themselves in innocent amusements, and before lying down, they say a short prayer to the Blessed Virgin, and make an act of contrition. I exhort you to do the same, particularly if your family retire late. By so doing, you will be less exposed to the temptation of reciting your prayers carelessly, or with too much precipitation, of suppressing a part or omitting them altogether, which often happens when one is overcome by sleep.

A quarter of an hour's daily meditation is indispensable to every young person who wishes to preserve and increase her piety. Never, then, omit this holy exercise. Perform it immediately after your morning prayer, and before leaving your room. You were taught at school the method of making it; be faithful to it.

Meditation is but an affectionate application of our mind and heart to God, to the great truths of faith, to everything that may excite us either to do good or avoid evil. It is not difficult to those who have the good will. Hence it follows that, when a soul sincerely desires her salvation, she applies herself to this holy exercise; it becomes sweet and agreeable to her, and she reaps marvellous fruits therefrom.

The saints assure us it is impossible that those who consecrate at least a quarter of an hour daily to meditation, should lose their salvation. They regard prayer as incompatible with the state of sin; they speak of it as the infallible remedy of

the wounds of our soul, as the source of all virtues and the true gate of heaven.

Examination of conscience is an exercise not less indispensable than meditation. Make it always at your night prayer. It consists, as you know, in reviewing the actions of the day, that you may learn how you have accomplished your duties towards God, your neighbor and yourself.

If, by a misfortune, the very thought of which is terrifying, you find yourself guilty of any mortal sin, resolve to confess it immediately, and make an act of contrition from the very depth of your heart. Such an act, well made, joined to the desire of confessing, will, from that very moment, reconcile you with God.

If you wish to preserve your devotion to the most holy Virgin, and obtain her powerful protection, recite the rosary every day, but be on your guard against the routine with which it is generally said. Try to enter into the sublime sense of the prayers which compose it, and meditate, at each decade, on one of the mysteries of the life and death of our Lord or His holy Mother. It would be better to recite only one part of the rosary with piety and attention, than to say the whole of it with distraction and hurriedly.

Extraordinary graces have been very frequently obtained by the recitation of the rosary. I might give many instances, but shall confine myself to the following:

A young person returning to her family after

having finished her education, found therein, alas! no example calculated to preserve her in piety. She was forced to listen to impious conversations, and to behold those around her live in a manner wholly unchristian. While at school, she had adopted the pious custom of saying the rosary every day. She continued it at home, with the particular intention of obtaining her parents' conversion. One day, as she was engaged with her mother in arranging the household linen, the thought occurred to her to ask her to join in the recitation of the rosary. To please her child, the mother consented, and she did the same on the following days. The father having found them on one occasion thus engaged, rallied them for their devotion, and even went so far as to utter some insulting expression, regarding the Blessed Virgin. Overwhelmed with grief, the young girl made no reply, but was not able to restrain her tears; seeing which, her father retired, muttering some very improper words. The pious child, finding herself alone with her mother, opened her heart to her, and told her of the grief she felt at seeing God daily offended in their house. With all the energy of which she was capable, she depicted the misfortune of those who live in sin, and refuse to honor the holy Virgin. This woman, who still preserved some sentiments of faith, was touched. She continued to recite the rosary with her daughter, and a short time afterwards, a mission being given in that place, the pious young girl had the happiness of seeing her parents enter on the right way, in which they faith-

fully persevered. They afterwards acknowledged that the first inspiration to return to God, was produced by seeing their daughter recite the rosary with so much assiduity and piety.

Father Clement, a celebrated preacher of the last century, being called to confess a young man stricken with apoplexy, found him wholly unconscious. He went, in all haste, to say a Mass for him in honor of the Blessed Virgin. At his return he found the patient in full possession of his senses, and penetrated with sentiments of the most lively compunction. He confessed, and received the sacraments with the most touching piety. The priest, surprised at finding such excellent dispositions in a young man whose excesses were but too well known, questioned him, and the sick man answered in a voice broken with sighs: "Alas! Father, I can attribute this grace only to the infinite mercy of God, and to my mother's prayers. When at the point of death, she called me to her bedside, and, after having expressed her fears of the dangers I would incur, the holy woman made me promise to recite the rosary every day. I have been faithful to the promise, but I acknowledge that, for ten years, it has been my only act of religion."

No young lady, whatever her occupations may be, can say she has not time to perform the exercises we have indicated. To those who assign such a frivolous excuse we say: You have time to talk to your friends, to spend a long time at your toilet, to give yourself up to curious and useless reading, to

learn everything that transpires around you, to gratify a thousand other fancies; see how many precious moments you waste in those frivolities. . . . Retrench a part from them, and you will have time to pray. If, on account of your position, time be absolutely wanting to you, take some few moments from sleep, to make at least your morning prayer and meditation; you can perform your other exercises while you work.

It is related of St. Catharine of Sienna, that her parents having burdened her with all the domestic labor, in order to divert her from thoughts of a more perfect life, she, through obedience, gave herself with ardor to the work imposed, without in the least relenting from her fervor, because, amidst all her employments, she continued to think of God and elevate her heart to Him. Imitate this great saint, if you find yourself similarly circumstanced, and say not that you cannot pray. For the rest, know that without prayer, you cannot be saved: *If you renounce prayer, you renounce your salvation.*





## CHAPTER IV.

### *WEEKLY EXERCISES OF PIETY.*

Mass on Sunday—Days of Abstinence—Vespers—Sermons—Ignorance of the truths of Religion—St. Ignatius' and St. Augustin's assiduity in hearing the word of God—Reading the Lives of the Saints.

IT is unnecessary, dear children, to remind you of the precept which commands you to hear Mass on Sundays, or to exhort you to obedience to it. Neither need I urge you to conform yourselves, on all occasions, to the days of fast and abstinence appointed by the Church. These are laws of strict obligation, from which none can be dispensed, save for very weighty reasons. But, in addition to this, I would advise you to attend Vespers on Sundays. The Church does not impose it upon us as an obligation, but those who wilfully absent themselves from this office are not without fault.

Be assiduous, also, in attending the instructions and sermons given in your parochial church on Sundays and festivals. Carelessness on this point, (become, alas! too much the fashion, now-a-days,) is the cause of the weak faith of some, and the ignorance of many in regard to the truths of faith.

If you do not assist at the sermons or instructions of your pastors, you will, in time, come to forget the essential articles of religion, of which you cannot be ignorant without endangering your salvation. This is not impossible; I have known several young persons who fell into this misfortune. Scarcely two or three years had elapsed from their leaving school, yet their religious knowledge went no farther than how many persons there are in God, which of the three Divine Persons became man, and in what manner our Lord gives himself to us in the Blessed Eucharist. Their confessors, aware of their having spent several years at a Convent-school, were far from suspecting the real state of the case. No doubt, when they left school, they were as well-instructed as yourselves, but they neglected to attend the instructions of their pastors, they read no books calculated to preserve or increase their religious knowledge, and thus, by degrees, they fell into lamentable ignorance; inexcusable, because voluntary and culpable.

That you may avoid so deplorable a misfortune, make it a rule to hear the word of God, when you can do so without great inconvenience; be present also, at times, at the catechetical instructions given to children.

St. Ignatius, although thirty years old, and invested with an honorable rank in the army, was not ashamed to assist frequently at the instructions given the children in Barcelona.

St. Augustin tells us that his conversion was

partly owing to the assiduity with which he attended St. Ambrose's sermons.

"My heart," said he, "was touched with the eloquence of this holy man, and by degrees, it opened itself to the teachings of truth. Thy divine word, O my God," adds this holy doctor, "gives us a foretaste of heavenly things, and detaches us from all that is terrestrial."

If possible, introduce into your families the laudable custom of reading, in common, in the evening, the Lives of the Saints. What good you would do, could you succeed in this! The Lives of the Saints is the Gospel put in practice; one is often more moved by the example shown therein than by the most eloquent sermons. Formerly, this pious custom prevailed in the greater number of families. Some of our pupils have succeeded in introducing it at home, to the great satisfaction of their parents, who, in the evening, see themselves surrounded by their children and domestics gathered together for this pious exercise. If you cannot make it a daily practice, try, at least, to have this pious reading on Sundays and festivals.





## CHAPTER V.

### *MONTHLY EXERCISES OF PIETY.*

Confession; Necessary dispositions—Communion; Preparation and Thanksgiving—St. Aloysius, St. Margaret, and others—Effects of Holy Communion.

§ IN the way of life, my children, one meets many difficulties in going to God. It is so easy to err, that we have need of a sure guide to conduct us, and our falls are, unhappily, so frequent, that we need the help of a charitable hand to raise us, a salutary balm to heal our wounds, and a substantial nourishment to repair our strength, exhausted by the fatigues of the journey. The sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist offer us those precious advantages. Never allow a month to pass without approaching them; do so, even more frequently, if your confessor permit. But be on your guard lest you do it by custom, and without suitable preparation; you would then change into poison those divine remedies, prepared by our Lord with so much love, to heal and strengthen our souls.

As it is extremely important that you always make good confessions, I will briefly remind you of

what you should do, every time you approach the holy tribunal of Penance. Five things are of absolute necessity:

1st. *To pray with faith and confidence.* This condition, essential to obtaining the graces and lights of the Holy Spirit, is but too often neglected by the young. Think of your confession for several days previous; offer all your prayers in the intention of preparing yourself for it; recommend to the most holy Virgin and your good angel the success of so important an action; recite with fervor the *Veni Creator*, or some other prayer immediately before your examination.

2d. *Carefully examine your Conscience.* You should do this without anxiety or trouble. Bring to it a real desire to learn your faults, in order to acknowledge them with candor, and do not torment yourself if you find them difficult to remember. See in what way you have made your prayer, how you have conducted yourself in regard to your parents, your family, your neighbors; try to know your habits; run over the circle of your occupations, and, if necessary, aid yourself by the detailed examinations to be found in books. The few moments examination that you make every evening, will aid you very much in your preparation for confession.

3d. *Excite yourselves to sorrow for your faults.* This is an indispensable condition; you should give more time to it than to your examination. It is not necessary, however, to have sensible sorrow; but it must really exist in the heart and will, and must

be accompanied by the firm purpose never again to fall into sin.

4th. *To confess all your mortal sins with candor and humility.* The confession of venial sins is not of obligation, but you might regard as venial, faults which would be more serious. The surest way, is to confess even venial sins, and I earnestly exhort you to do so. Your confessor will then understand more clearly the state of your soul, and you will be more certain of receiving the application of the indulgences you desire to gain; for the Church does not remit, by indulgences, the temporal punishment due to venial faults that have not been confessed, or for which one has not been sorry.

5th. *To satisfy God and your neighbor.* One satisfies God by performing the penance imposed in the sacred tribunal, as also by other good works; one satisfies his neighbor by repairing the injuries he has inflicted in his person, reputation, property, etc.

After confession, thank God for the grace He has granted you; review in your memory the advice of your confessor, and resolve to follow it. Be careful, afterwards, not to speak lightly of your confession, or your confessor; to do so, would be to fail in the respect due the sacrament, and might lessen your sense of the gravity and importance of this action. Should any one jest upon this matter in your presence, show, by your silence, how displeasing such levity is to you. Be equally on your guard against the contrary excess; do not imitate those who speak

of their confessors in terms of exaggerated praise, and delight in repeating with enthusiasm, the sublime maxims of virtue they have heard from his lips. The better way, my children, is to remain absolutely silent about your confession and your confessor, unless you clearly perceive you can do good by acting otherwise.

Spend in recollection the time that intervenes between your Confession and Communion; be more watchful over yourself, indulge not in noisy recreations, read no light books; such things would lessen the fervor of your soul, and rob it of the unction of of piety.

Rise somewhat earlier the morning you are to communicate, that you may have more time for preparation. Let your dress be modest, but carefully arranged: neither too elegant nor too careless. Hear Mass with more than ordinary recollection. When the time of Communion draws nigh, renew your acts of love and desire; then present yourself at the Holy Table with every mark of respect, without external eagerness or marked slowness. After you have communicated, return modestly to your place, and entertain yourself with the God of goodness who has honored you with His visit. Speak to Him of your defects, of your spiritual and temporal necessities, of your trials, your projects; listen to His inspirations, consult Him; tell Him, in all the sincerity of your heart, that you wish to accomplish His holy will in all things, and to serve Him all the days of your life. If you feel drawn thus to entertain

yourself with our Lord during the whole time of your thanksgiving, leave books aside; you may make use of the formulas contained in them, when your heart is dry, and your mind distracted.

Your thanksgiving should last, at least, a quarter of an hour. Return, then, to your home, and try to spend the day in perfect innocence, avoiding all sallies of temper, dissipation, and everything that could disedify your neighbor.

You should try to spend a little more time than usual in prayer, for the three days that follow your Communion, in order to preserve longer the fruits of that action, so great, so holy.

St. Louis de Gonzaga, before becoming a religious, lived in the midst of the grandeur and scandal of the world; nevertheless he communicated every week, and was accustomed to employ the three days previous to his Communion, in prayer and acts of penance; the three following days he devoted to thanksgiving. When receiving the Heavenly Bread, his face was usually bedewed with sweet tears, which bore witness to his happiness and joy. He was accustomed to say very often, that one who has tasted how sweet it is to love our Lord, and how delightful is His visit, imposes on himself a very great sacrifice, when he tears himself away from that delicious enjoyment.

On the eve of the day on which St. Margaret of Hungary was to unite herself with Jesus Christ, by the reception of His adorable Body, she took no nourishment except bread and water, and she spent

the night in prayer. On the day of Communion, she prayed and fasted until evening.

We, ourselves, have known pious young persons who performed some severe penance on the eve of their communion. After having participated in the heavenly feast, they went about their different occupations with diligence and recollection. Filled with holy joy, they supported with admirable patience the vexations attached to the difficult positions in which Providence had placed them, for the delights they had tasted at the Holy Table, animated them with a strength and courage truly extraordinary.

This, my children, is one of the precious effects of Holy Communion.

This heavenly bread also augments in us Charity, the queen of virtues; it allays the heat of our passions, makes us love the things of God; gives us a disgust for the fleeting pleasures of this life; and, to crown all these ineffable advantages, it unites our souls intimately with God, who is all love and charity, and it causes us to live in Him a divine life. The saints, who had an experimental knowledge of these marvels, desired with extreme ardor to nourish themselves frequently with the Eucharistic Bread. Would, my children, that you were animated by the like desire; but God will give it to you, only inasmuch as you detach yourselves from earthly things. Ah, could you but know how sweet it is to desire only our Lord, and to sigh only for the possession of His love! . . . . . In the Eucharistic festival the soul experiences those celestial joys, which

infinitely surpass those of earth; it is here she is consoled under the sorrows of life, the injustice of the world, reverses, losses, vexations of all kinds, from which no one is exempt in the sorrowful voyage from time to eternity; here, in fine, does she recognize the truth of those words of the prophet: *One moment spent with Thee, O my God, is better than an age in the tabernacles of sinners.*





## CHAPTER VI.

### *ANNUAL EXERCISES OF PIETY.*

Retreat—Anniversaries of Baptism and First Communion—Examples.

**Y**OU will derive great advantages, my children, from an annual retreat of some days. It is a powerful means to preserve the sentiments of faith and piety instilled into your souls in childhood, to repair the spiritual loss you may have sustained by contact with the world, and to bring you forth from sin, if you have, unhappily, fallen into it.

Should you be invited to make this retreat in the religious house in which you spent your early years, accept the invitation with thankfulness; thus you will have an opportunity of testifying your affection and gratitude to your former teachers, of receiving their advice and being edified by their piety; you will there meet the schoolmates and companions of your childhood who have persevered in good, and your heart will be sweetly and powerfully excited to a salutary renovation.

During those days of retreat, be very exact in following the rules prescribed by the Superior of the

House for the maintenance of order and regularity, and try to edify those around you.

Were you to carry worldly news and a spirit of dissipation into the asylum opened to receive you, were you to show yourself exacting and irritable, were you to fail in silence, or cause distraction to others, you would not only be guilty of rudeness and impropriety, but would clearly prove that your spirit of piety is almost extinct, and that you have come to the retreat rather as an auxiliary of the tempter, than as one who expects to derive fruit from it.

Wherever or whenever you make your retreat, enter on it only from a sincere desire to promote your own salvation; regard not those days as days of pleasure; they are a signal grace, for which you must render a strict account to God, and on which, perhaps, your eternal weal or woe depends.

If you find it impossible to free yourself wholly from your occupations for a few days each year, let me exhort you to make a retreat at home, at whatever time you may find convenient. Consult your confessor, and follow his advice on this point. An examination of the state of our affairs in regard to God is of so great importance that we should be willing to suffer much inconvenience, rather than omit it.

Besides this annual retreat, it would be well, my children, for you to make a serious review of your conduct at two other epochs:

1st. *The anniversary of your Baptism.* On that

beautiful day, God and the Church adopted you as children. The demon lost the rights acquired over you by the fall of our first parents; through the intermedia of your godfathers and godmothers, you renounced the works and pomps of Satan to attach yourself to Jesus Christ. Fervently renew those solemn promises; thank the Most Holy Trinity for your divine adoption; examine whether you are living as true children of God and the Church, and take firm resolutions for the future.

2d. *The anniversary of your First Communion.* Every pious young person should celebrate this day, justly regarded as the happiest of one's life; none other leaves such sweet and touching memories. On this anniversary, approach the Holy Table with particular dispositions of fervor and gratitude. Consecrate yourself anew to the service of that good God, who has granted you so many favors in the sacrament of His love; fervently thank Him for His ineffable goodness in your regard. Meditate for a moment on the excellence of the august sacrament of our altars; remember the joy of that beautiful day on which you were called to participate in it for the first time. Transport yourself in spirit to that spot which witnessed your joy, your transports, your tears of gratitude. Behold the recollection of your companions, the emotion of your parents and teachers, the attention, the zeal of the ministers of God; the decorations of the holy place, the congregation so pious, so deeply impressed.

Hearken to the hymns of love and joy which

resounded in celebration of your happiness; behold the holy angels, who envied the immense favor bestowed by the King of kings on a young, careless girl of ten or twelve years, light, and, doubtless, as yet without much piety! In fine, behold our Lord Himself coming to you who had so often offended Him, who still loved Him so feebly—coming to you, I say, with such great sweetness, tenderness and love! . . . . What did He say to you in that moment of ravishing joy? . . . . What did you promise Him in return for the immense benefit He had granted you? . . . . What did Jesus ask of your young soul? . . . . Have you kept your promise? Have you offered to our Lord all that He asked? . . . . Are you disposed to do in future whatever He expects from you?

A young girl had most carefully preserved the veil, crown and book, which she had used on the day of her First Communion. She was often seen to kiss those objects in transports of joy, mingled with a holy respect. On being asked why she rendered them this species of veneration:—"Ah!" she replied, "they recall that day when my soul was well with God, and in gazing on them, I seem to feel again the like happiness." She had begged the grace of dying before she would lose the innocence she had recovered in her participation of the heavenly banquet. God called her to the eternal feast before she attained her eighteenth year.

Another young girl placed her First Communion veil among her jewels and richest ornaments, to the

end, that when obliged to use those objects of vanity, in obedience to her parents, or to satisfy the requirements of her position, the sight of the veil might remind her that she ought to despise the pomps of the world, since she had solemnly renounced them on the day of her First Communion.

These little things prove the good-will of a young heart; they are often very efficacious for the renewal of piety, and God sometimes attaches to them particular graces.

On the anniversary of your First Communion, renew, also, your consecration to the Most Holy Virgin, and place under her powerful protection the resolutions you take. Again, examine whether all the communions you have made since that happy day, have produced in you the fruits of salvation. See what may place obstacles to the grace of the Divine Sacrament, and take resolutions according to your necessities.





## CHAPTER VII.

### *PRAYER.—(Continued.)*

In particular circumstances, we must pray more frequently—St. Lucy, Virgin and Martyr—Madame Louise and Madame Henrietta, daughters of Louis XV.—The demon's efforts more multiplied in the world.

THUS far, dear children, I have recommended those pious practices which you cannot neglect, whatever your position in the world, if you wish to maintain in yourselves the spirit of faith, and preserve the holy dispositions which animated you when you went forth from the convent school. But I must warn you that there are particular circumstances, in which those exercises would not be sufficient to assure your perseverance in good.

If, for example, you find yourselves exposed to violent temptations, or placed, against your will, in the midst of occasions dangerous to your salvation, should you not have more frequent recourse to God, and take special precautions to keep yourselves unshaken amidst the storms that rage around you?

The virgin, St. Lucy, born at Syracuse, then capital of Sicily, was, at the age of fourteen, earnestly

solicited by her mother to espouse a young pagan nobleman. From her very infancy she had found her delight in prayer and meditation on holy truths. Convinced of the nothingness of all that usually flatters the young, and full of the love of God, she had consecrated herself to Him by the vow of perpetual virginity. The entreaties of her mother, who, nevertheless, was a Christian, and the contradictions to which she was subjected to oblige her to accept a mortal spouse, caused her extreme pain, but she redoubled her prayers and pious exercises, to obtain of God the succors she needed in the terrible struggle she had to sustain.

Her mother, falling sick, seemed to forget her project for some time. Her health being restored afterwards at St. Agatha's tomb, thanks to her daughter's prayers, she placed no further obstacle to Lucy's pious design of leading a more perfect life.

Meanwhile, he to whom the virgin of Syracuse had been promised, redoubled his pursuit. Lucy had recourse to prayer, fasting, and extraordinary alms-deeds to obtain the grace of preserving her heart pure and ever faithful to the heavenly Spouse. Denounced to the judge of the province as a Christian, by the very man who had professed such unbounded love for her, Lucy generously confessed her faith, and the judge, irritated by her firmness, condemned her to be tortured. Armed with the shield of prayer, she resisted all the efforts of hell, and after enduring with constancy the most dreadful torments, she rendered her pure and beautiful soul

into the hands of her Creator, and gave her life in testimony of her faith in Jesus Christ.\*

Suppose, my children, that you be so situated as to have considerable time at your disposal; may you, without danger to your salvation, lose that precious time, or spend it in idle and frivolous occupations? Should you not, rather, consecrate it to God by rendering Him your homage and prayers?

Under such circumstances, dear children, frequent and fervent prayer becomes an imperative obligation on you, and you should not content yourselves with those exercises required of others who are overwhelmed with business, continual care, and anxious solicitude. The more leisure you have, the more beset will you be with temptations, to overcome which, you will require the succor of extraordinary grace, which can be obtained only by fervent prayer.

Madame Louise, daughter of King Louis XV, while at Fontevrault, under the guardianship of the Ladies of that abbey, conceived the design of leading in the court a regular and Christian life. Being introduced, at the age of fourteen, to that theatre of worldly seductions, she, at first, performed with exactitude her self-imposed exercises of piety, but, by degrees, her fervor became cooled, her good-will grew weak, and she would soon have abandoned herself to the dissipation and vanities of a court, had she not perceived, from a serious examination of her conduct, that she required extraordinary graces from

\* St. Lucy's feast is kept on the 13th of December.

God to escape the snares laid for her. She began, from that time, to frequent the sacraments more regularly, to meditate more assiduously on the truths of faith; she imposed on herself daily prayers and pious reading, and by these means preserved her innocence amidst the dangers of a court, until the age of thirty years. It was, doubtless, this very fidelity which merited for her a call to a more perfect life. After many delays and severe trials, she, by earnest solicitations, obtained of the King, her father, permission to embrace the institute of the Carmelites. For eighteen years she led in the cloister a most fervent life, and died in the odor of sanctity.

Madame Henrietta, another princess, and sister of Madame Louise, died in the flower of her age, after having led the life of an angel, in the midst of a scandalous court. Prayer and the practice of good works, constituted her delight. She withdrew herself, as much as possible, from the festivities of the court, and when obliged to assist at certain entertainments, she gave herself up to prayer while others amused themselves, often at the expense of their virtue.

You, my children, although not at court, are in the midst of families, either wealthy or in easy circumstances; you are exposed to many more dangers than those young girls, employed from morning to night in helping their parents, or in work necessary to the support of the family. You, perhaps, will be invited to worldly festivals, and will, doubtless, often be tempted to take part in them, in order to

fill up your leisure time and relieve the ennui of an idle life. Seek elsewhere, dear children, the remedy of that weariness. Give yourself more assiduously to prayer; you will find therein consolation and sweetness, a thousand times preferable to the factitious pleasures of the world.

To the pious practices of which I have spoken, and which are necessary to every young person, add those I here designate:

- 1st. More frequent confession and communion.
- 2d. Daily attendance at the Holy Mass.
- 3d. A visit to the Blessed Sacrament every evening.
- 4th. A half-hour's meditation every day.
- 5th. More frequent pious reading and examination of conscience.

Ask the advice of your confessor, or of a pious and prudent person, acquainted with your health and position. Either will choose what is suitable for you in these different practices, and you will freely subject yourself to what will be prescribed you. If you be faithful, you will speedily taste how sweet the Lord is to those who give themselves unreservedly to Him.

I repeat, dear children, you will be safe amidst the enticements of the world, and will preserve the faith, only inasmuch as you be assiduous in your exercises of piety; they will be your safeguard, your rampart, your buckler against the attacks of your passions, of the world, and of Satan. Remark the multiplied snares those different enemies lay for your ruin, in proportion as you advance in life.

When at school, you experienced some of their malicious attacks, but you had then around you attentive mistresses, who helped you to baffle their machinations, and who prudently kept far from you whatever might taint your innocence. What care, what vigilance, what minute precautions did they not lavish on you! . . . . .

My children, who watches over you now? Who baffles the projects of the demon? Who teaches you to know and avoid the snares by which you are surrounded? Who speaks to you of God and His love? Who reminds you of your duties? Who warns you of your faults? Whose is the friendly voice that calls to you as you stand on the brink of the abyss: "Beware! do not advance"?

Can your mothers, my children, replace the teachers you have left? Have they their experience, their spirit of faith, their good-will? . . . . . Alas, my children, your mothers, good and loving as they are, are, but too often, wholly absorbed in domestic duties. They are preoccupied with a thousand cares, a thousand anxieties continually fill their minds, they have, perhaps, even great sorrows of which you are ignorant. . . . . Hence they cannot watch over you as your teachers could; their eyes, again, are less clear-sighted; I may even say, that their excessive tenderness deludes, deceives, and blinds them in your regard. Besides, you know well, that, if you show yourselves docile and laborious, in even a slight degree, they think you perfect, and never weary of praising you.

You have, then, my children, as your guarantee against shipwreck in that sea of life so full of rocks and shoals, in which you are now launched, only the means of prayer, but that prayer must be constant and persevering. Pray, my children, pray often, and pray as you should. Pray while you are young; pray also when more advanced in years, and by prayer you will work out your salvation.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### *DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.*

Its Utility—Never neglect pious practices in honor of Mary—Propagate devotion to her—Examples of her powerful protection—The Scapular—To recur to Mary in spiritual necessities—To manifest our love for her—To honor St. Joseph.

**T**HERE is, my children, another means, most efficacious in preserving innocence and piety in the midst of the world; I mean, *devotion to the most holy Virgin.*

You have been taught from your earliest years to love the august Virgin, to honor her and invoke her daily. You have been told that all graces flow through her hands, and that a tender devotion to the divine Mother of the Redeemer is a mark of predestination. You have relished these truths, and have accustomed yourselves to go to Mary with love and confidence, as children go to their mother.

How ardently, during your sojourn at school, did you second your teachers' zeal for the honor of this powerful Queen! How did you vie with your companions in testifying your filial love for her!

Even now, doubtless, you remember with happiness, that convent-chapel dedicated to Mary, which you so eagerly visited on her festivals; you have

not forgotten your pious reunions in her presence, the hymns sung in her praise, your solemn consecrations to her service, the very recreations you sometimes had in her honor; and then, that pious congregation of the *Children of Mary* to which you, perhaps, belonged,—what touching memories for your hearts! . . . . .

Those days of pure delight are no longer yours, dear children; you are far from the house of the Lord; you are in the world, in that world cursed by God because of its scandals, in that world which is Mary's enemy!

Ah! it is now that you have especial need of your august Mother's protection! But know well, that the demon will make every effort to lead you to neglect devotion to her; thus does he always begin his war against the young soul of whose innocence and piety he is jealous. If you hearken to his evil insinuations, you will find the rosary too long and tiresome to be recited every day; soon you will say only a decade of it; then, you will omit it altogether. The scapular, which you wear in Mary's honor, will also seem, some day, to be in the way. You will leave it off, at first, only when you have made a more elaborate toilet, lest it may show through the filmy tissue of your dress, and give offence to some persons; then you will cast it aside altogether. Your medal of Mary Immaculate, the gage of your solemn consecration to her service, will appear to you at some time or other as a jewel not sufficiently brilliant, and you will be ashamed to wear it.

Meanwhile, in proportion as you despoil yourself of those objects which remind you of the august Protectress of your innocence, your sentiments of love will grow colder; you will almost cease to pray to her; you will not think that she is far from you; her sweet name, her beloved image will no longer bring joy to your heart.

Then it is that dangerous friendships, vain dress, frivolous projects, will occupy your mind and heart, and bring therein trouble, anxiety, agitation and remorse!

O, how unhappy is she who has abandoned devotion to Mary! What an abyss is opening beneath her feet!

You will not be of this number, dear children; you will preserve your pious practices in honor of the most holy Virgin; you will love to meditate on her virtues, and retrace them in yourselves; you will approach the sacraments on her feasts, and will do all in your power to contribute to their celebration.

But be not contented with loving Mary and honoring her yourself; exhort those around you to do the same. Speak to your parents, your relations, the friends of your family, your neighbors, of the power of the Blessed Virgin; relate some examples of her merciful goodness. A great number of these may be found in many works you can easily procure; but I cannot refrain from the pleasure of citing here some that have occurred quite recently. The following will prove how efficacious is devotion to the Blessed Virgin in correcting a bad disposition.

A young girl named Josephine belonged to a very wealthy family. At the age of twelve she was pale, thin, pretentious and disagreeable. No one felt any liking for her; and nevertheless, she was richly dressed, and with so much taste that her friends used to whisper to each other: "She looks like a princess, but she is only a magnificent doll."

The poor child had had the misfortune of being indulged and gratified in her least caprices; and, consequently, she became so proud, greedy and self-willed as to be insupportable.

Meanwhile she was growing up, and her parents began to see their error, and wished to correct it, but their endeavors were fruitless. When her mother reproved her, she flew into a passion; if her father scolded, she became rebellious. Finally, her parents decided on sending her to be educated in a convent boarding-school.

If you have ever seen a bird caught and imprisoned in a cage, you will be able to form some idea of Josephine's manner of acting during her first few days in the convent. At first she was morose and taciturn; then, all of a sudden, she gave herself up to a thousand extravagancies, and showed her faults in such bold relief that her mistresses were dismayed. Happily, those ladies were possessed of the necessary experience and devotedness. By means of patience, sweetness, kind words, and, at the same time, great firmness, they succeeded in subduing her restive, indocile character. The gentle influence of piety gradually penetrated the heart of the child, who,

finally, expressed to the religious her desire of becoming better, and of being admitted among the number of the Children of Mary. The efforts required were very great, but, sustained by the protection of the most holy Virgin, whom she daily invoked, she succeeded so well as to operate in herself a complete transformation. No longer vain, capricious and self-willed, she seemed a lamb by her gentleness and goodness, an angel by her fervent piety.

A few days previous to her admission into the congregation of the Blessed Virgin, she wrote to one of her friends as follows:

“How great shall be my happiness, dear Louise; I shall soon be a *Child of Mary!* . . . . I see myself already at the altar, pronouncing my act of consecration; I see our worthy director placing around my neck the sacred chain which is to bind me to the most holy Virgin.

“But how proud I am! Should not I rather be expelled from our good Mother’s chapel? . . . . Nevertheless, I hope; it is so sweet to hope! How delighted I shall be with the title of *Child of Mary!* I prefer it to all that the world can give, and I shall endeavor to render myself more and more worthy of this good Mother. I cast myself with confidence into her arms, there to find my refuge; I place myself within her heart. O! how sweet it is in this amiable heart! What an agreeable dwelling! When one is there, no sacrifice seems hard!”

After two years spent in school, the pious child

was attacked by influenza, which led to a pulmonary disease. She had a presentiment of her approaching death, and wished to occupy herself only about her eternity. The news that she had become heiress to two million francs, which reached her about fifteen days previous to her death, could not distract her from the thoughts of faith which continually occupied her. One evening she begged her confessor to come to her early next morning. "It will be Saturday," said she, "and the holy Virgin, my good mother, will, doubtless, come early to conduct me to heaven." In fact, she expired on Saturday, at six o'clock in the morning, while pronouncing the sacred names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

To this edifying anecdote, I will add another, to prove the efficacy of recourse to Mary for the conversion of sinners.

M. Recamier, an illustrious physician of our day, on one occasion attended a family in which the husband was seriously ill. After three months' struggle, despite all the resources of art, death came with its train of tears, regrets and despair. The friends could easily perceive it, and as they were Catholics, M. Recamier thought the sacraments had been already administered. When making his final visit to the patient, he became witness to an unexpected scene. "I implore you to do it, my dear," said the young wife, weeping bitterly, as she embraced her husband in an agony of supplication. The mother, trembling with emotion, knelt beside the bed, and held the icy hand of the dying man, while she said: "You will see,

my child, that it will bring happiness to us all. The sacraments draw down the benedictions of heaven, and often restore health."

"Well, well! what is the matter?" said the doctor, entering.

"Ah, doctor," cried the mother, rising, "is it not true that the sacraments have often saved those dangerously sick?"

"Yes, yes," eagerly answered M. Recamier, to whom this question was a complete revelation.

"Leave me, leave me all of you," murmured the sick man in a hollow voice; "you torment me uselessly, you torture, you kill me!"

The doctor, with his habitual penetration, foresaw, in a religious discussion, a threatening peril and imminent danger. Consequently, he made a sign to the mother and wife to keep silence.

"Come, come, sir," said he, drawing near the sick man, "give me your hand, and let us not quarrel. Your mother, your wife and myself are anxious only for one thing—the termination, or at least the alleviation of your sufferings. There, now, say not a word; lie tranquil; let all this trouble pass. I will return to see you soon."

So saying, he left him.

"Ladies," added he in a low voice, to the wife and mother who attended him to the door, "be prudent and have confidence; say nothing to the patient, but supplicate heaven to render fruitful the good words you have said. I see he wears the scapular; I am convinced that the holy Virgin has manifestly pro-

teeted him for some days past; beg her to complete the work, and say some Hail Maries for this intention." It was late when the doctor took his departure. Hastening to a religious house, which he also attended, he begged the holy inmates to pray to the Blessed Virgin for a patient in whom he felt a lively interest.

In his own family, night-prayers were always said in common. On this occasion, the venerable head of the family announced, that, before finishing their prayers, they would say three Ave Marias for the return to God of a sick man already on the brink of the grave.

At six o'clock the next morning, Recamier hurried to his patient's house. What a happiness there awaited him! The holy Virgin, so devoutly implored, had obtained the poor sinner's conversion. He had asked for the priest, and had received the last sacraments during the preceding night.

"Come in, doctor," he cried, "come in; I am perfectly happy; I have made my peace with God."

M. Recamier seated himself beside him, and listened to the details of the happy event. A few moments later, the newly converted soul passed to the presence of its God.

I beg of you, dear children, to wear the scapular constantly. You have heard that the Blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Simon Stock, that *whoever would be invested with this holy habit, should not suffer eternal pains*. It is well known that the wearers of it have often been preserved from serious

accidents. I shall cite one instance from among thousands.

Several years ago, an immense multitude had congregated in the superb gardens of Versailles, to see the grand fountains play. As soon as the spectacle was over, all wished to return home at the same time. The conveyances were overloaded; people fought for the first chance of returning to Paris. Finally, the trains left Versailles *en route* for the capital, but ere they had traversed half the distance, the passengers were startled by a series of shocks. Soon a cry arose, followed by a succession of agonized groans and shrieks. The first locomotive had broken down; the second rushed on, and the cars that followed were overturned, and broken into a thousand fragments, over the burning locomotive. It was a veritable tempest, a fiery shipwreck, an indescribable calamity. Thousands of persons were wounded, hundreds were killed and consumed in the flames.

Two young medical students were rescued from the frightful wreck. Their carriage had been totally demolished. One of them had his leg broken, his arm dislocated, his whole body covered with bruises; the other had not received a scratch! The latter having taken his friend to the hospital, he there dressed his wounds, and rendered him every possible attention. Then embracing him, as one would a dying brother, he said, with deep emotion, to one of the Sisters present:

“Sister, I do not recommend my friend to you. I

know you attend to all the sick; but I beg you to have him invested with the scapular. I acknowledge that I am not much, but I wear the scapular, and I am convinced that I owe my preservation to it. I alone, of all the passengers, have escaped unhurt."

Above all, have recourse to Mary in your spiritual necessities, in your doubts of conscience, in all your perplexities. No one can so truly enlighten, encourage, and direct you in good. On a certain occasion, a young lady had a happy experience of this.

After having spent several years in innocence and fervor, she committed a fault, which she regarded as so serious, so shameful, that she felt extreme repugnance to confess it. Nevertheless, she was continually tortured by remorse; the fear of death and hell left her no repose. A hundred times did she wish to cast off her burden in the holy tribunal, but a hundred times did bashfulness, pride, and the demon's wicked insinuations withhold her from doing so. Finally, she was inspired with the happy thought of having recourse to the most holy Virgin. With artless simplicity and entire confidence, she wrote a letter, asking her powerful succor. Having placed it at the foot of Mary's statue, in an oratory which she frequented, she went for nine days to that place to expose her wants to her good Mother. At the end of the novena, she revealed the wound of her soul to her confessor, with a facility, and even with a pleasure of which she could have formed no idea, and she was astonished at having previously had so much repugnance to an act of humility which procured her so much joy and peace of heart.

Pious young ladies, after leaving the religious houses in which they were educated, are generally anxious to be admitted into the Sodalities or Confraternities of our Immaculate Mother, established in their respective parishes. I have seen some of them accept, with gratitude, the charge of adorning the altar or chapel of the Blessed Virgin, and join with ardor in the hymns sung in praise of God and His divine Mother. See, my children, what you can do to glorify God. Do not imitate those proud and haughty young persons, who think it derogatory to their dignity to unite with other pious girls, inferior to them in rank, in the practice of piety. I know there are certain proprieties to be observed, but I also know, that ill-regulated self-love hinders many young ladies from giving edification in their parish, and doing therein all the good they might.

I cannot conclude this chapter without speaking of the glorious Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin, and Foster-father of the Infant Jesus. No saint has ever been so favored as he. Mary loved and respected him, and she and the Divine Infant were subject to him; he had the happiness of dying in their arms and surrounded by their cares. Often beg him to obtain for you the same grace. If it be in your power, perform some exercise in his honor every day of the month of March, which is consecrated to him, as also the Wednesday in each week. The feast of this great saint is celebrated on the 19th of March; try to approach Holy Communion on that day.



## CHAPTER IX

### *THE LOVE WE OWE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.*

Precept of this love; its excellence and advantages—St. Agatha, Virgin and Martyr—The world does not love our Lord—The Infant Jesus—Jesus Crucified, and His Sacred Image—Jesus in the Eucharist; His privileged Children—Sœur Marie Ange—The Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Consoler of the afflicted.

IT is designedly, my children, that I place here what I wish to say regarding the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, although, it might seem, it should have found place before the preceding chapter.

The love of our Lord is the perfection of Christian life, and can be attained only through constant prayer, fidelity in accomplishing the duties of one's state of life, and frequent recourse to her who is, by excellence, the *Mother of fair love*. Hence, I have exhorted you to employ these means, without which it would be impossible to comprehend the excellence of the love of our Divine Saviour, and the happiness of one who possesses it. The love of our Lord is a precept of the divine law, a precept at once the grandest, the sweetest, and the easiest; nevertheless, we cannot fulfil it without the aid of God's grace, which we must incessantly implore.

Possessing this love, one is happy, even in the midst of poverty, privation and suffering; this love supposed, there is nothing hard, nothing difficult in the practice of virtue. The heart wherein it reigns is always cheerful and contented, because it is ever in the enjoyment of its Beloved. You may love your parents, friends and teachers very much, but but you cannot be always in their company. If, however, your heart be given to our Lord, you will ever enjoy His presence, because, being God, He is everywhere; you can speak to Him at all times, consult Him, communicate to Him your troubles; you may even hear His voice, and behold Him interiorly by faith, because He dwells within the soul that possesses sanctifying grace.

May the Holy Spirit enlighten your understanding, dear children, to fully comprehend this consoling truth. Here there is no question of mystical conception, of a pious but exaggerated idea. Our Lord Himself reveals this truth in the Holy Gospel, when, speaking of those who observe his commandments, He says: *We will come and take up our abode in him.*

The illustrious virgin, St. Agatha, had the happiness of experiencing the truth of our Saviour's promise. Belonging to a family noted for its rank and wealth, gifted with every quality that the world values and seeks after, she made no account of those ephemeral advantages. Her heart attached itself to our Lord, and sought to please only that heavenly Spouse, whom she had preferred before all mortal

spouses. In vain did the wealthiest noblemen of Sicily offer her their homage; in vain did her parents entreat her to enjoy the advantages presented her on all sides; Agatha was too deeply grounded in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ to be seduced. She lived humble and modest in the house of her parents, apart from the noise and festivity of the world. Despising perishable beauty, she thought only of adorning her soul with every virtue, so as to be agreeable to Him whom alone she loved, whom she possessed in the depths of her heart. She spent her time in reading the word of God, and in fervent prayer, and in those holy exercises she found ineffable joy.

In the meantime, Agatha's beauty and rare qualities were spoken of all over Sicily, and worldlings were surprised at her making so little account of her advantages. Finally, they learned that she was a Christian.

The governor of the province, a violent persecutor of the disciples of Jesus Christ, caused the young maiden to be brought before his tribunal, and said to her, in a severe tone:

"Are not you ashamed, you who bear so illustrious a name, to adore a God who was born in a stable, who died upon a cross?"

"You are, then, ignorant," replied the saint, "that this great God humbled himself only to teach us to despise the pomps of this world? He is infinitely powerful in heaven and on earth; He alone is God; your idols are nothing."

The exasperated governor threatened her with the most frightful torments, but Agatha remained invincible. During the interrogatory, she constantly repeated in the depth of her heart: "Jesus, my sovereign Lord, the beloved Spouse whom I have chosen, thou knowest what I desire! . . . . Be thou the sole possessor of all that I am. Thou art my Pastor, I am thy sheep; preserve me from the ravenous wolves that wish to drag me out of thy hands." The persecutor, despairing of being able to overcome her constancy, put her into the hands of wicked women. The young virgin, like a gentle dove in the midst of vultures, endured their bad treatment with heroic patience, and came forth from their hands, purer and more courageous than ever.

Then the furious governor caused her to be extended on the rack. The executioners tore her flesh, burned her with hot irons, tortured her in a thousand ways, but failing to overcome her, they threw her into prison in that pitiable state. During the night the Prince of the Apostles appeared to her and healed all her wounds. The enraged judge caused her, on the morrow, to be rolled over potsherds and burning coals. During this torture, the saint, unable to moderate her joy, cried out: "O Lord my God! Jesus, only beloved of my heart, thou hast protected me from my cradle, thou hast rooted out of my heart the love of the world, thou hast chosen me for thy spouse; for this be thou eternally blessed! Receive me now into thy arms, call

me to thy embrace. I wish to live eternally with thee!" . . . .

Thus did she terminate her glorious martyrdom, in the year 250, having scarcely attained the age of fifteen years.

There were at that time, my children, in Rome and Sicily, a great number of young ladies, rich, beautiful, and sought after by those who esteem the vain advantages of time. Many, doubtless, allowed themselves to be seduced by the flattery and homage of the world. They shone, perhaps for a time, they enjoyed their fleeting triumphs;—where are they now? Saint Agatha, who despised the world to attach herself to Jesus Christ alone, has been, for sixteen centuries, in possession of that immense happiness which she shall eternally enjoy. . . . .

Which do you prefer, my children? Which is true, solid, lasting? Who made the better choice? Which will you choose for yourselves?

Alas! my children, in the world no one knows Jesus, no one loves Him! . . . . One sometimes hears Him spoken of; His name is in every book; but it would seem that there is question only of a man, somewhat remarkable, it is true, who did some extraordinary things, but about whom we concern ourselves very little; it is so long since he lived! . . .

What deplorable indifference! what monstrous ingratitude!

You, my children, who are better instructed regarding the things of God, you, to whom the Lord has given hearts so sensible, so good, so grateful,

will you one day place yourselves in the ranks of those who know not, who love not our Lord Jesus Christ? . . . .

Reanimate your faith, excite your heart more and more to a tender, solid, and generous love for our divine Saviour. Believe truly, believe firmly, that He exists, that He is the Son of God, infinitely powerful like His Father, from all eternity; that He became man to redeem you from the devil, your enemy, from the hell you had merited; that He lived poor, subject to His parents, forgotten on earth, and that He labored in the sweat of His brow, like the least of men, to give us an example of all virtues. Believe that He has signalized His mercy and power by wonderful miracles, to demonstrate at once His divinity and His immense charity for us; and that, finally, He died on the cross, after having instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, to prove to us His ineffable tenderness. Oh! how precious a gift, my children, is faith in our Lord! Preserve it ever living, ever ardent in your heart! Woe to the young person who suffers it to grow weak! . . . .

I engage you, also, to have a special devotion to three principal mysteries in our Lord's life.

1st. *Jesus as an Infant.* Recall to your mind the beautiful festivities of Christmas at the convent. With what eagerness did you surround the crib! How joyfully did you sing the canticle of the angels! How fervently did you consecrate yourself to the Divine Infant! Be not now less devout to this beautiful mystery.

How many times did you promise the holy Infant Jesus, to imitate, throughout your whole life, His obedience, gentleness, modesty, and humility! Are you faithful to your promises?

How often did you say, that, for His love, you would give alms to the poor, whenever it was in your power! . . . Do you console the poor? do you give them of your superfluity? do you love them? If you had a real love for the Infant Jesus, you would deprive yourself of certain things, which you could spare without inconvenience, to assist those whom He regards as part of Himself.

2d. *Jesus crucified.* Behold, my children, the incomprehensible mystery of sorrow and ignominy, which, more than all others, displayed our Lord's wonderful love for our souls.

Jesus crucified! Can you gaze upon His image without being moved? Can you think of it without sentiments of most lively gratitude?

Alas, my children, in the world no one thinks of it; it is spoken of without emotion! The crucifix is not even found in the houses of the greater number of Christians. They would be ashamed to place it in their parlors and drawing-rooms, where is displayed all the luxury of wealth; nay, it is not to be found even in their own rooms. When they wish to furnish and ornament their dwelling, they think of everything except the crucifix.

My children, you will not act thus; you will dare to show yourselves Christians. The principal ornament of your chamber will be the august sign of our

redemption, and you will, if possible, also place it in the most frequented places in your house. You should do even more; you should habitually carry about with you a little crucifix, indulged for a happy death; you should often kiss it; and place it at night on your breast, with the medal of Mary Immaculate, and the scapular. Thus you will reanimate your faith, and keep alive in your heart the love of our Lord. These simple practices, which demand no effort, ordinarily produce those salutary effects.

A young girl, shortly after leaving the religious house in which she had been formed to virtue by her pious teachers, was invited by her mother to choose from among several articles of jewelry that which pleased her most. The young girl showed no anxiety to make this choice, and even gave signs of indifference. Her mother, much astonished, began to fear that exaggerated ideas of luxury were the motive of her coolness. "How is this, my daughter," said she, "do you find nothing to your fancy?" "The young lady is hard to please," said the jeweller; "I present her the most beautiful assortment of jewels that can be found at present."

Still the young lady remained silent and undecided; but being again urged, she said: "Mamma, I would prefer a crucifix to all these diamonds. I pray you, buy me some more simple ornament, and allow me to procure that object which I prefer to all jewels."

Her mother, a very pious woman, transported with joy, embraced her, and replied with emotion:

"You could do nothing more pleasing to me, my child; I delight to find in you such religious sentiments. . . . May you ever preserve them!"

The beautiful crucifix was purchased, and was afterwards indulged for the Stations, and a happy death.

Many years later, this young girl, become the mother of a family, after having suffered great trial and severe afflictions, showed to her children the crucifix, which had never left her, and said:

"Behold this crucifix, my children; from the contemplation of it, I have learned patience and resignation. By kissing it, I have renewed my courage, and have found abundant consolations amidst the reverses and sorrows I have met with. Place it in my hand when I shall be on the point of leaving you. I wish that, at the supreme moment, it may be pressed to my lips, that I may give testimony to our Lord of my love and gratitude."

The Church commemorates the death and sufferings of our Lord on the Friday of each week, and during all Lent. Meditate often, during that time, on those mysteries of sorrow, make the Stations of the Cross, and offer God, every Friday, some privation or practice of mortification.

3d. *Jesus in the Eucharist.* I would wish to have the tongues of angels and the heart of saints, my children, to exhort you to love our Lord in this adorable sacrament. Feeling how incapable I am of speaking of it worthily, I shall content myself with some reflections on a subject so beautiful.

Jesus is in the Eucharist to remain with us, and make Himself beloved by us. See, nevertheless, how he is unknown, forgotten by the world. The churches are deserted; Jesus is alone in his tabernacle, nearly always alone! . . . . But He is not discouraged; He waits, He waits continually, and will do so to the end of ages! . . . .

And what does He expect with such patience, with such touching goodness? He expects you, my children, to visit Him sometimes, He expects you to go and pray to Him with more love than do the people of the world, He expects you to adore, praise, and bless Him, while so many sinners outrage Him. It is, perhaps, for you alone, that He remains in your parish church; in the poor tabernacle in which His minister has enclosed Him, He remains there to give you, you young persons who still love Him a little, the consolation of adoring Him, of entertaining yourselves with Him, of receiving Him in Holy Communion!

Make reparation, then, to our Lord, my children; render Him love for love; go often to the foot of the holy altar to pray to this God so good, who makes it His delight to dwell with His children. Entertain within yourself a great desire of receiving Him in Holy Communion, and lead a life so pure, so edifying, that your confessor may permit you to approach the heavenly banquet frequently. In this way, you will give particular pleasure to our Lord.

When you cannot communicate sacramentally, supply for it by spiritual Communion; that is to say

by fervent acts of love for our Lord, and desire of receiving Him. Fail not to make those acts every time you assist at the holy Mass. Make them, also, when, through sickness, multiplied occupations, or some other reason, you are not permitted to communicate as frequently as you would wish. Our Lord loves to behold these fervent dispositions in youthful hearts, and He often grants to them consolations equal to those of sacramental communion.

Although this chapter is already too long, I wish to give you, on the subject of Holy Communion, an example which you will read with pleasure. It is related by R. P. Geramb, in his *Letters to Eugene, on the Eucharist*.

A young person of high birth, but of still more exalted piety, terrified by the dangers of the times in which she lived, and the obstacles she found to frequent Communion, entered into an enclosed convent, in order to occupy herself wholly with Him who was her love, in the secrecy of silence and obscurity.

On entering that abode of peace and innocence, she opened her heart to the superioress and the confessor, and told them that the most powerful motive that had determined her to quit the world, was the hope of being able to receive the Sacrament of Love more frequently and more worthily.

The superioress and confessor, after some time of trial, allowed her frequent communion, and one year after she had pronounced her vows, she was permitted to receive it daily.

Who could describe the joy of Sœur Marie Ange

(such was her name), at being able to nourish her soul daily with that eternal Bread descended from heaven, and containing in itself all delights! Her soul blessed with transports the merciful Hand that had drawn her forth from the world, and removed her far from the habitations of sinners. She spent all her leisure moments before the Most Holy Sacrament, and, like a languishing dove, while others slept, she arose to return thither. There, like a drooping lily, her hands crossed on her heart palpitating with love, she murmured, in a voice which, at times, failed through the vehemence of her love: "O Sacrament of my God, Jesus, my life and my love, how I long to be with thee! how necessary thou art to me! O divine Object of my earthly happiness, what peace do I taste near thee! what amiable transports in my very sorrow and regret for my offences! In thy presence, everything seems as nothing! thou alone, O my Jesus, art everything to me! Depart from my memory, vain pomps of human pride; I wish, I desire only the masterpiece of the love of my God! O Altar, thou dost remind me of the crib. . . . . Another birthplace of Jesus, thou enclosest all the delights of my soul. O my Jesus, in thee is all good, in thee is all love! . . . My God, hear my prayer. . . . May I expire before thy tabernacle, burning with love, or drowned in my tears!" . . .

The fleeting hours, ushering in the dawn of day, would find her still before the cherished object of her affections; this occasioned no surprise to the

community, which knew and respected her virtues and her ineffable tenderness for the most holy Sacrament of the altar.

Nevertheless, the Father of mercies, who loves to lead souls to the repose of heaven by the thorny path of suffering, who rough-hews the saints on Thabor, and perfects them on Calvary, permitted that a new superioress and another confessor should believe it their duty to deprive Sœur Marie Ange of the permissions and privileges she had hitherto enjoyed.

She obeyed without a murmur. . . . "Provided," said she to her herself, "that they leave me to sigh at the feet of my God. . . . His love will be the necessary balm to all my wounds. . . . Him alone do I desire; He knows it, He wishes it; this is enough for my heart."

But accustomed as she had been to unite herself daily in the most holy Sacrament to Jesus, her Spouse, her health began to fail, when she no longer received this Bread of life. Sad and languishing, she would prostrate herself before the tabernacle that enclosed her Jesus, her happiness, her life, whom she could now receive but once a fortnight; sighing like the plaintive dove, she would say: "Where is thy God, Sœur Marie Ange? . . . Whither have flown those happy moments in which thou didst so fully relish the sweetness of His divine flesh?" . . . Then, in a voice like to that in which the dying Christian breathes his last prayer, she would pour forth the accents of her grief:

"O Jesus, my King, my Master, and my God, yes, I love thee, I desire thee! The cruel privation to which I am reduced, only makes my love increase each instant. . . . The torrent of affliction can neither suspend its activity, nor diminish its ardor."

What she suffered from the deprivation of frequent communion, is not to be described. She concealed her grief and repressed her tears; she scarcely heaved a sigh of complaint. Overcome at length by her inconsolable love, she sank one day at the foot of the sanctuary, where she was found unconscious. When borne to the Infirmary, she was found to be so ill, that it was thought necessary to administer the last sacraments.

"Mother," said she in a faint voice to the superioress, "for a long time I have languished in expectation of the beautiful day on which I should be united eternally with the Spouse of my soul. Our Lord wishes now to come once again to console me: ask our good sisters to beg the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels to accompany this God so good, and to form a court for Him like that of heaven; permit, also, that the way over which He is to pass, and this cell in which His spouse is dying, be strewn with flowers."

After a moment's reflection, the superioress replied: "You shall be gratified, dear child." The sisters scattered the richest flowers along the aisles of the church, the cloisters and the infirmary.

At the approach of the thrice-holy God, Sœur Marie Ange arose from her couch, and waited,

kneeling and supported by her sisters, for Him for whom alone she breathed. She received her Beloved, her God, with a fervor impossible to describe. Shortly afterwards, she expired, surrounded by the Sisters, who envied her her happiness."

Reanimate your fervor, my children, during the octave consecrated by the Church to honor the Holy Eucharist; assist at the Benedictions and processions which then take place; aid in adorning the altars and repositories raised for those solemnities; in fine, contribute as far as in your power to the adornment of that spot, in which resides your tender Saviour, the Father, the Friend, the beloved Spouse of your souls.

Celebrate, also, with great fervor, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; prepare yourselves for it by some special practice, and cause yourselves to be enrolled in the confraternity erected in its honor. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the touching emblem of the immense charity of the Son of God for men; the devotion to this Divine Heart, approved by the Church, is become dear to every Christian.

I shall conclude, my children, by transcribing here some lines, written by Father Valuy, of the Society of Jesus, in order to excite young persons to have recourse to our Lord, as to their best friend, in the time of reverses and afflictions; I think that you also will find them very useful.

"Jesus Christ, in order to prove to us His compassionate tenderness, has been willing to experience fatigues, infirmities, weariness, cruel apprehensions,

poverty, calumny, treason, even death itself. Hence we know that He is the Friend of the afflicted, since He has been afflicted Himself; attentive to our tears, since He has shed them; occupied about our evils, since He has endured them.

“Come, then, tell Him your pains; speak to Him of your sufferings. How sweet it will be to you to bend towards Him, to offer Him your woes when His heart feels them; to allow your groans to fall upon His ear when you hear His! Will He refuse to aid you, you whom He beholds buffeted by the same storms that assailed Him on earth?

“The Heart of Jesus weeping and afflicted. Ah! behold the heart of our Friend; it is the heart of which we have need in our exile; it is the heart which our heart claims. We need the heart of a friend acquainted with sorrow, of a friend loaded with infirmities, of a friend assailed by temptation; we need the Heart of Jesus. As man, He has experienced all; as God, He will heal all. In depriving Himself of consolation, He merited it for us; in sharing the evils of our sad condition, He found the ineffable secret of thus changing afflictions into favors, and tears into privileges; and by bearing His cross, He bears all those that are attached to it.”





## CHAPTER X.

### *PROPRIETY TO BE OBSERVED IN CHURCHES.*

Its Importance—Respect for the ceremonies of Religion—Examples of many Princes—Respect due to Ecclesiastics.

ALLOW me, my dear children, before concluding the first part of this work, which I have devoted to entertaining you with your duties towards God, to remind you of certain proprieties which belong to those duties, and which should be most carefully observed.

By failing, sometimes, in some of these proprieties, I do not say, my children, that you would offend God, but if you neglect them habitually, if you regard them only as puerile obligations, you will lose that respect due to all that appertains to religion, and you will come, by degrees, to fail in the most indispensable christian habits. You are aware, that when one easily neglects little things, one is very apt to omit greater. Hence you may conclude how important it is for you to subject yourselves to whatever can contribute to preserve and increase in your heart the sentiments of faith and piety.

When you assist at the divine offices, let your outward appearance give evidence of respect and decorum; show, by your deportment, that you com-

prehend the majesty of that place in which you are going to pray.\*

Make your genuflection on entering; take holy water, offer it to those who accompany you; and go without precipitation, to the place you occupy.

If you arrive after the service has commenced (which should be avoided as far as possible), and it be difficult for you to reach your place without disturbing others, do not go any further. Act in the same way, when, for just reasons, you may be obliged to retire before the conclusion of the ceremonies.

It is absolutely contrary to the respect due to God's temple, to promenade therein, to engage in conversation, even for a few minutes; to turn the head from side to side, or to gaze about; to salute therein persons of your acquaintance, to inquire after their health, etc.

A church cannot be considered a public place; it is a house of recollection and prayer.

When seated, you should, with the utmost care, avoid moving about in your place, going to sleep during the sermon, coughing violently, using your handkerchief in such a way as to disturb others; in a word, everything capable of distracting those around you, or of revealing your own fatigue and weariness.

It is wholly unnecessary, I think, to remind you that it is the height of impropriety, to spit on the floor, to bring dogs with you, or to carry parcels that cannot be concealed.

\* This article is drawn, for the greater part, from Mme. de Massieu's admirable work on Politeness.

When the collection is taken up, you should accompany your offering or refusal with an inclination of the head.

When you approach the altar to receive Holy Communion or the blessed ashes, avoid whatever might disturb good order, or produce the least confusion; quietly await your turn, and take it without precipitation.

When you communicate, take off your gloves and leave your book in your seat. The most recollected exterior, the most modest deportment, should announce that your soul is penetrated with the thought of the greatness and sanctity of that action.

When you go to the confessional, and find many persons there waiting their turn, show not the slightest impatience. If you be in the necessity of claiming the kindness of those who came before you, do so with sweetness and politeness; show your willingness to render the like service, if any one ask it of you, when you can do so.

If you meet a procession, or a priest carrying the Holy Viaticum, stop and show some exterior signs of respect. Let your veneration extend to all the ceremonies of divine worship.

The Emperor Ferdinand II. alighted from his horse or coach every time that he met a priest bearing the Holy Viaticum; he knelt upon the pavement, despite rain or mud, to adore his Divine Master and receive his blessing.

Rudolph, Count of Hapsburg, being one day engaged in the chase, met a priest, carrying the

Holy Viaticum to a dying man, who found it difficult to cross a creek swollen by the rain. He immediately alighted from his horse, made the priest mount thereon, while he followed him on foot.

The Emperor Napoleon III. has, in our own day, given an example somewhat similar. He was going to a country place attended by a numerous cortége, when he met a priest carrying the Holy Viaticum. The emperor made him enter one of his carriages, and, with his entire suite, accompanied the Holy Sacrament, giving particular marks of faith and respect for the august Eucharist.

Never allow yourselves, my children, to lose sight of the truth that the ministers of religion, in the exercise of their holy functions, are God's representatives upon earth, and that they should be to you, objects of particular respect. In society, they have equal right to your deference. If, sometimes, in the intimacy of your families, they come to share your innocent pleasures and mingle in your reunions, be careful that your demeanor be particularly modest and free from all pretension.

Absolutely interdict yourself from the least familiarity, or the slightest remark on the external appearance and manners of ecclesiastics whom you may have occasion to meet.

In speaking to or of a priest, one should say *Father*, or *Rev. Father*; in speaking of bishops, one should prefix the title of *Rt. Rev.* A religeuse should never be addressed as *Miss*, but as *Madame*, or *Sister*.



## PART SECOND.

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### YOUNG LADIES' DUTIES TO THEIR FAMILIES.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### *IMPORTANCE OF THOSE DUTIES.*

They are the touchstone of true piety; without their accomplishment, there is no solid virtue.

AFTER your duties to God, there are none more sacred, my children, than those imposed on you by nature and religion in regard to your parents. If you neglect them, you cannot please God, even though you should say long prayers, and perform severe penances.

That young person deceives herself, who, faithfully performing her exercises of piety, and finding herself free from grave sins, sets her mind at ease with regard to her state before God, while she habitually displeases her parents, and is disagreeable and quarrelsome with her brothers and sisters. Her piety is false, or rather, she has none at all. One

may say that in her mouth, prayer is only madness, meditation a vain dream, her relations with her confessor so much loss of time.

No, my daughters, true piety consists not in prayer and the frequentation of the sacraments, these are only indispensable means to acquire, to perfect it, and to persevere therein. Piety essentially consists in the accomplishment of the duties of our position, and the practice of the virtues required in it.

Be on your guard, then, my children, against illusion on this point. Examine, from time to time, what fruits you draw from prayer and the frequentation of the sacraments; by these fruits you may judge if you be walking in the right way.

If you daily become more submissive, more respectful, more attentive towards your parents, more gentle and loving to your brothers and sisters, more patient and charitable to your neighbor; if you know how to overcome your temper, to yield willingly to others, to deprive yourself of dangerous amusements, to fly curiosity, vanity, and sensuality; if, little by little, you lose the vain esteem you have of yourself, if you bridle your tongue, if you become laborious, if you have great fear of sin, then, and only then, may you believe that you are well with God; for our Lord says: "*Not those who say: Lord, Lord, (that is, those who pray much,) shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Heavenly Father.*"



## CHAPTER II.

### *DUTIES TO PARENTS.*

Love—Veneration—Terrible example related by St. Augustin—A young Illinois maiden—Mme. Acarie—Deference and respect to parents—Example of a proud and foolish young girl—Obedience to parents—Saint Perpetua—A young priest—Happiness won by filial piety—Misfortune of children who afflict their parents—Several examples—Assistance due to parents, etc.

**Y**OU cannot, my children, carry too far the love you owe your parents. So long as it does not equal that which you owe to God, it will not be inordinate.

If you love your parents, it will be your delight to converse with them, to confide to them your secrets, to pour out your soul into theirs; you will nowhere find so much pleasure as near them; your heart will suggest to you the most tender caresses, the most delicate attentions.

You should venerate them as the representatives of God, speak to them with respect, hide and excuse their faults, suffer even ill-treatment, rather than cause them the slightest pain. How guilty are they, my children, who afflict their parents by wicked and injurious conduct! God curses and punishes them, sooner or later.

St. Augustin relates that, in a city of Cappadocia, a widow, distinguished by her birth and fortune, had ten children, seven sons and three daughters. One day, the eldest so far forgot himself as to say injurious words to his mother, nay, even to strike her. The others, instead of reproving and preventing their brother, suffered him thus to treat their mother.

The mother, incensed at her children's hard-heartedness, went early the next morning to the baptismal font. There, prostrate on the earth, she, with many tears, begged of God that her children might, in punishment of their crime, become an example of terror to the whole world, and might go through it wanderers and vagabonds like Cain. The unhappy mother was heard. All her children were seized with a horrible trembling of all their members, which no remedy could heal. Ashamed to appear in such a state before their fellow-citizens, they went into different countries. "Two of those wretched beings," says St. Augustin, "came to Hippo. They appeared in the assembly of the faithful, bearing the terrible marks of the anger of God, and, after humbling themselves and repenting of their fault, they were cured by the intercession of St. Stephen, whom we invoked in their behalf."

A young Indian maiden, of the tribe of the Illinois, acted far differently in her mother's regard.\* This woman, exasperated at her daughter's having become a Christian, loaded her with ill-treatment, and

\* The Illinois are a North American tribe. Catholic Missionaries preached the faith to them in the sixteenth century.

tried to make her espouse a cruel and deceitful young man, who desired to marry her only that he might force her to renounce her faith.

So violent was the persecution to which the young girl was subjected, that she was compelled to take refuge with some Christian relations. There, deprived of air and exercise, she contracted a disease, which did not, however, cause any abatement in her fervor. Learning, some time later, that her mother was in danger of losing her sight, the generous girl hastened to her aid. Her tenderness and assiduous attention so won her mother's heart, that she embraced the Christian religion, which she had so lately persecuted in the person of her daughter.

It is related of Mme. Acarie\* that her mother, regarding as an excess of devotion the regular and pious life led by her child, treated her with a certain kind of violence, to oblige her to give herself more to worldly dress and amusement.

On one occasion, she even condemned her to suffer, during several days, the cold of a severe winter. The young girl's feet were so much frozen

\* Mme. Acarie, born in 1566, for a long time edified the world by the practice of works of charity and of all virtues. She had much to suffer from her husband; twice she lost her entire fortune. She met with many bitter misfortunes which she endured with extreme patience. She contributed very much to the establishment of the Carmelites in France. Three of her daughters entered that holy institute; she herself made her vows in it, three years previous to her death, and took the name of Sister Mary of the Incarnation. On account of her remarkable virtues, she was beatified by Pope Pius VI, in 1791.

that she had to undergo a painful operation. Never did she allow the least complaint to escape her lips; not one word did she utter against a mother so severe, one might even say, so cruel in her regard.

Whatever may be your age and position, my children, never fail to celebrate each year, your parents' birthdays and feastdays; offer them, on those occasions, some token of your affection. During the time of your education, your mistresses taught you to fulfil this duty; do not neglect it when in the bosom of your families. Be assured that your parents will be extremely sensitive on this point; such little attentions will increase their affection for you. Nothing so attaches the heart as presents, and how precious to the authors of your being are those which come from you! The older you become, the more you be overwhelmed by cares, the more will they be touched by this mark of attention on their feasts, or at Christmas or New Year's day. It is remarked that, in families in which this beautiful custom prevails, there is great union and reciprocal love.

If you be at a distance from your parents, write to them from time to time; inform them of what you are doing, interest yourself in whatever might be agreeable to them, and always end your letter with expressions of the most respectful affection. In your intercourse with them, be faithful to those habits of deference and politeness which are revealed in the air, the countenance, the tone of the voice, and the general deportment.

Whatever instruction and education you may have received, be very careful never to remark anything that may be unrefined in your parents' manners or language. Be neither proud nor contemptuous in their regard; be not ashamed of them, wherever you may meet them. Such things will be evidences of proud foolishness, and win for you the contempt of men, and the curse of God.

I once knew a young girl to err essentially in this respect. She lived in the country, but, on the occasion of which I speak, she was visiting some friends in the city. Her toilet was extremely elegant, for her mother, who blindly loved her, could refuse her nothing, and, besides, her fortune allowed her to spend much on this object. In a much frequented part of the city, the group of young girls met her mother, dressed like a peasant and very rustic in appearance. One of them said to the young girl of whom I speak: "I believe that is your mother; perhaps she is looking for you." "Mamma?" answered the latter, blushing; "O, no, I do not think it is she," and she hastily turned aside to avoid seeing her mother, and prevent her being noticed by her friends. The latter, indignant at such conduct, speedily broke off all connection with a person so exceedingly proud and foolish. Unfortunately they did not keep silence in regard to the occurrence. The poor mother wept bitterly, and it was spoken of so much in public, that the proud girl's reputation suffered in consequence.

To the respect which you owe your parents, my

children, join a prompt and affectionate obedience. Never make them repeat their commands; nay, if it be possible, prevent their desires. Never authorize yourselves, either on account of your age, or position, or education, to dispute with or disobey them, at least where there is no question of manifest violation of the laws of God or the Church.

St. Perpetua, a martyr of Carthage, being urged by her father to renounce her faith, resisted him with a courage so much the more admirable, as she had to do extreme violence to the sweetest sentiments of filial piety imprinted in her heart. This man, who held a distinguished rank in the city, was unfortunately a pagan. He cherished Perpetua above all his children, because of her delicate attentions, her perfect docility, and all the amiable qualities which revealed the brightness of her virtue. Thrown, with many other Christians, into an infected prison, among malefactors, Perpetua, at first, felt an extreme horror for the place they were in, of which she could have formed no idea, but nothing was so painful (as she herself writes in the history she has left us of her sufferings) as her father's persistence in entreating her to renounce the religion of Jesus Christ. Every day he came to the prison to try to conquer her resolution. Afterwards he brought her her son, still at the breast, from whom she had been separated, and conjured her by her love of that being so dear, to preserve her life by apostasy; then he fell at her feet, called her no longer daughter, but "my lady," and supplicated her with many tears to have compas-

on his gray hairs. Sometimes he loaded her with injuries, treated her with cruelty and barbarity; then delivering himself in her sight to fearful despair, he tore his hair, rolled on the ground, cursed his old age, and filled the air with his cries of distress.

We may judge what the saint suffered. "I was profoundly afflicted," says she, "at the blindness and despair of my father; he was the only one of my family who was a pagan. At the last interrogatory, he came again to urge me to preserve my life by renouncing the Christian faith, and as his cries and entreaties occasioned some noise around the tribunal, one of those present gave him a blow, to oblige him to retire. I suffered cruelly at the affront put upon my father in his old age, on my account."

The love of our Lord must have been very strong in the heart of this illustrious martyr, to enable her to bear the sight of the profound affliction of a father so beloved, who cherished her with such extreme tenderness.

Similar miracles of grace occurred during the Revolution, which in the last century made so many martyrs in France. That which I am about to relate, happened in the city of Vans (Ardèche).

A young priest was led to the public place of that city, there to be executed with eight other faithful priests. The brigands called his father, and said to him: "If you oblige your son to take the constitutional oath, we will spare his life."\* The unhappy

\* This oath could not be taken without committing sin, as it required conditions contrary to the laws of the Church.

father, undecided, vacillating between nature and religion, vanquished finally by human tenderness, threw himself upon his son's neck, and more by tears than by words urged him to comply. "My son," said he, "save my life by preserving your own." "I will do better, father," replied the son, "I will die worthy of you and worthy of my God. You have brought me up in the Catholic religion; I have the happiness to be a priest of this holy religion; will it not be better for you to number among your family a martyr rather than an apostate?" The father knew not to which impression to yield; he again embraced his son and wept over him. The executioners dragged him from his arms. . . . . The courageous priest stretched out his neck to the assassins. The father's cries troubled them; two badly-directed blows extended the son upon the ground, . . . but he arose, again presented his neck to the executioner, and consummated his sacrifice.

Even young children have given evidence of admirable courage when required to choose between the obedience due to parents and that owed to God.

Several years ago, a child of Avignon, who had led a life but little edifying, up to the age of thirteen or fourteen years, having made his first Communion, changed his conduct and became very good. It was in Lent, and flesh-meat was served at his father's table. Up to that time, the child had found no difficulty in following, in this regard, the bad example of his parents, but on this occasion, he would no longer disobey the precepts of the Church. His

father, as indignant as surprised, exclaimed: "Very well, sir, you shall have nothing but bread."

"Willingly, father," said the child; "religion teaches me that I must obey you in everything that is not displeasing to God, or opposed to His commandments." In fact, during several days, the child ate only bread. The mother secretly prepared some other food for him and desired him to eat it, assuring him that his father should know nothing of it. "No, mamma," said he, "my father has ordered me to eat nothing but dry bread, I can live on it; but even were I to die, I would prefer death to disobedience." The father, hearing of his son's constancy and submission, was so touched, that, through the remainder of Lent, he caused the precept of abstinence to be observed by his family.

If, in all that is not repugnant to your conscience, my children, you be perfectly obedient at home, you will often be able to gain points very conducive to the spiritual good of your families. What can a father or mother refuse to a child, docile, gentle, submissive to their slightest wish? We have seen some, who, in order not to grieve their pious child, presented themselves at the holy tribunal to fulfil duties they had long neglected. We have known them to banish scandal from their house, and to leave off fatal habits, that they might no longer afflict a daughter who was the joy and happiness of the family, by the ingenious artifices of her filial piety. O! how many things you could do, my children, if you were to your parents all that you should be!

Give them evidence, then, on every occasion, of the love, respect and obedience prescribed by nature and religion; never take advantage of their indulgence, sometimes excessive, or of their kindness, which so often degenerates into weakness. If, through affection, they allow you some liberty in the choice of your recreations, food or clothing, give them no cause to repent it; even follow, on such occasions, their advice and their taste.

Young persons who conform their conduct to these regulations, merit very justly the affection of their parents, and spend with them days full of happiness.

We ourselves have been witness of the happiness of some, during those precious days of youth which others spend in sadness and weariness, dreaming for the future a chimerical happiness, without enjoying that offered them in the bosom of their family.

We have known two young girls, who, during several years, enjoyed those precious advantages, and who might serve as models in this respect. They were sisters, and had left school, the eldest at seventeen, and the younger at sixteen years of age. They belonged to a wealthy and respectable family. Their father was a harsh and severe man, who frequented clubs, taverns, and gambling houses, and never appeared at home except at meal-time. As may well be supposed, he had long neglected every religious duty. Their mother, who was in very delicate health, endured in patience and silence her trials and domestic vexations.

The daughters, aware of their father's conduct, upon their return home endeavored to anticipate his every want; they vied with each other in loving attentions; they studied his whims, and avoided whatever might be annoying to him. At table, they remained silent, if he seemed to desire it; they entered into conversation when they found him so inclined. They remained up at night, often until very late, that they might have the pleasure of meeting him, and recounting all that had happened during the day. This man, who, notwithstanding his faults, sincerely loved his children, was sensible to so many marks of affection. He soon began to return home at an earlier hour, that he might not keep them up too long, and in many other ways he tried to please them. By degrees he became so fond of his children's company, that he almost ceased to frequent his former vile haunts.

Encouraged by their first success, the young girls tried to reawaken his religious sentiments. This was not an easy task; but what cannot be accomplished by persevering charity?

From time to time, in family conversations, they said a few words about religion, related some pious anecdote, avoiding any approach to what might seem a hidden lesson. They prayed, and obtained prayers for him, and, by truly Christian conduct, sought to interest heaven in his favor.

Meanwhile, nothing was wanting to their happiness in their paternal house, which they found so agreeable, that they refused several most advan-

tageous proposals in order not to leave their parents too soon. Moreover, they had made a mutual promise not to separate without having obtained from God the object of their most ardent desires,—the return of their beloved father to the practice of religion.

They were finally heard. Their father was afflicted with a severe illness, during which they lavished on him every mark of affectionate tenderness. Establishing themselves as his nurses, they passed the nights in turn by his bedside. When he grew worse, they spoke to him of God, of His goodness, of the consolations to be derived from the succors of religion; in a word, they led him to receive the last sacraments with great piety. He recovered, however, and continued to lead a Christian life, thus giving unequivocal proof of the sincerity of his return to God; and his pious daughters enjoyed with him, for some time longer, a happiness as perfect as can be found here below.

Young persons who grieve their parents by their disobedience, who afflict them by words, haughty, proud or arrogant, can expect only days and nights full of bitterness and anxiety. It is to be remarked that God sometimes punishes them in a terrible manner; they rarely prosper, and Divine Providence frequently permits them to suffer, in their turn, sorrows like those they have occasioned the authors of their days.

But a few years ago, I saw a young woman weeping bitterly for the disgrace brought upon her family

by an only daughter who was very ungrateful and disobedient. In her youth she had ill-treated her aged mother. The neighbors, aware of this fact, said secretly to one another: "God is just; He permits that to happen to her which she inflicted on her parents."

Another woman, abandoned and despised in her old age by her own children, remembered with anguish and deep repentance that she had sometimes refused, in her youth, to remain near her sick mother, in order not to deprive herself of certain amusements. She adored the designs of God, submitted to the expiation imposed by Him, and implored Him not to punish her ungrateful children as He had punished her.

But I know your hearts too well, my dear children, to think I ought to excite you to the fulfilment of the duties of filial piety by the fear of the divine malediction, and I hasten to turn your gaze from a picture so saddening. Rather read the following anecdote, drawn from an English author. In it one beholds the touching spectacle of the tender and affectionate sentiments of a virtuous daughter for the author of her life.

"My carriage stopped before the windows of a house; the glass being perfectly clean, allowed us a clear view. The room was occupied by an aged paralytic and a young lady, whom, from her peaceful countenance, her slender form and the attitude of her body, which formed a maidenly picture, I would judge to be the daughter of the sexagenarian.

Standing near his couch of pain, she arranged a pillow under the old man's head. Turning towards her his venerable countenance, he painfully raised his arm, and clasped her hand affectionately. She bent over him, took his withered hand in hers, carried it to her lips, and gazed on him for some seconds with tenderness and compassion; then seating herself at a table, she opened a book that lay thereon. By the motion of her lips, I perceived that she was reading to the aged sufferer. The expression of the young girl's countenance was animated; by degrees it became exalted; then both raised their eyes, and silently gazed upon each other. I should vainly endeavor to render the interpretation I gave to this double flash of their souls; I vainly seek for it in my memory; there remains there only the remembrance of an impression as lively as delightful. Every noble sentiment was depicted in the eyes of the old man, under the semblance of gratitude. Those of the young girl expressed every tender affection, exalted by sweet and beneficent piety. What was that amiable creature reading at that moment? Doubtless the promises made by the Eternal to those children, whose attentive and precious cares prolong the life of a father, who, by a pure and stainless life has merited such consolers. . . . . But my carriage was ready, the driver took the reins, the horses started, and I reached home, having still before my eyes that touching picture."

You are affected, dear children; nothing in fact, is more calculated to move a sensitive soul than the

sight of an aged and infirm father, consoled and cared for by a loving and attentive daughter. If your parents should ever be in such a condition, make it your delight to attend to your wants. Render them the most delicate attentions, the most affectionate cares; generously provide for all expenses, procure for them whatever may solace them, comfort them, or give them pleasure; should their health give cause for anxiety, deprive yourself of all amusement, of all frivolous distraction. Alas! you shall never be able to discharge the debt of gratitude you owe them!

You are also bound, dear children, to assist your parents in their spiritual wants, by reminding them, with prudence, respect, and charity, when they forget their religious duties. Young persons frequently have not courage to render this good office to their parents; they fear to provoke them, and hence remain silent, when a word might, perhaps, lead to a salutary change.

I am aware that, on this point, it is necessary to use much reserve and prudence, and that you must not seem to be giving them a lesson; but I also know, that there are circumstances, in which a wise and sensible child could, without inconvenience, remind them of the laws of the Church and lead them to the practice of religion.

You have always at least, my children, the power of soliciting, by your prayers and vows before the Lord, that which you might not be able to obtain by advice or direct exhortation. Beg each day, most

earnestly, the graces of which your parents have need, particularly in regard to their salvation. Absorbed by their affairs, they do not, perhaps, think of praying for themselves, and the temporal care of their family makes them, perhaps, entirely neglect the important affair of eternity! . . . . Interest the most holy Virgin in their behalf, pray to their patron saints, cause masses to be said for them; redouble your zeal at the time when they should accomplish the duty of Paschal Communion. If you have lively faith, what deep sorrow you should feel, when you see your beloved parents neglect this duty so important.

If your parents become dangerously ill, do not wait till the last moment to procure them the final succors of religion; see that they receive them in the full possession of their faculties, so as to profit by them to prepare themselves to appear in the presence of God: it is the last mark of tenderness and love they shall receive from you, and it is not the least important.

After their death, pray, and have others pray for them. Be not satisfied with some Masses and Communions during the first year after their decease; throughout your whole life, as often as your means will allow, have the Sacrifice of Propitiation celebrated for the repose of their souls, and, on your own part, pray daily for the same intention.

Remember, my children, that all the comforts you enjoy, all the fortune you possess, is the fruit of the labor and sweat of your parents. They shall, per-

haps, remain in purgatory for centuries, for having labored too eagerly to gain or preserve for you that fortune in which you now glory. Would you, then, fear to sacrifice a small portion of it to procure more speedily for them the repose of the saints? This would be a black ingratitude, which God would not be slow in chastising.

Your grandparents, your uncles, aunts, and, generally, all your relations, have more or less claim on your affection and regard. Seize every occasion of giving them proofs of it, and act so by your cares, attentions, and the sweetness of your manners, that all may have reason to be proud of you. Do this to contribute to the union and good harmony of the family, but still more to praise God and glorify Him by the accomplishment of one of His most indispensable precepts.





### CHAPTER III.

#### *ADVICE AND CONSOLATION FOR YOUNG ORPHAN GIRLS.*

The thought of heaven—The Blessed Virgin's protection—God declares Himself the orphans' Protector—Gratitude to teachers—Conduct in regard to step-fathers and step-mothers—Duties of a young girl who takes charge of the house.

§ IN running over the preceding pages, some of you, my dear children, have doubtless felt within your soul a most bitter sorrow. Your eyes have been suffused with tears; you have ceased to read of duties you would have been most happy to fulfil, but which are no longer for you. . . . It is because death has robbed you of the authors of your life; you no longer receive a mother's caresses and tender attentions; a father's love no longer rejoices your saddened hearts. You are orphans! . . . Oh! I understand your tears, dear children; I know the immensity of the loss you have sustained, and I would wish to assuage your grief by some thoughts drawn from the faith which animates the tried soul, and fortifies the broken heart.

Be consoled, my dear children; all is not lost for you. Through the mourning veil that covers you, that divine faith makes you behold in eternity a better

life than that of time. The tomb which you so often water with your tears, contains, as you well know, only the mortal remains of your beloved parents; their souls live eternally in the place of repose, if they served God faithfully. Go, in thought, to that eternal dwelling. One day, you, also, shall enter therein, and be reunited to those whom you regret for so many reasons.

The Lord, who has afflicted you so sensibly, has also given you a consolation in the sorrow that oppresses you. Raise your eyes, dear children, you who read these lines and water them with your tears, raise your eyes to the august Queen of Heaven; she is the Mother, the Protectress of orphans. Like the illustrious St. Theresa, you, without doubt, cast yourself at her feet, when the tomb was opened for her who gave you birth, and you said to her: "Thou art my mother." Renew in this moment that fervent prayer. Mary loves to hear it; doubt not that her heart, so good and kind, responds to this appeal of your artless love and first grief. You have placed her image in your chamber, and love to offer daily before it the tribute of your vows and prayers. Again, she herself is pleased to surround you with her affectionate tenderness!

From the height of heaven she has watched over you, since that moment in which the eyes of your earthly mother were closed in death while shedding over you her last tears; her gentle and powerful hand has protected and defended you against your enemies, since the hour in which that hand which guided

your first steps, became cold in the act of blessing you for the last time; her heart has been open to your wants since the shadows of death enveloped her who bore you in her womb, since they deprived you of her caresses, her solicitude, her love.

Yes, beloved children, Mary, the sweet and powerful Mary is your Mother; confide yourself to her love, delight to pray to her daily, and you will find in her all the delight, all the love, that a pure and innocent soul can desire. She will be the more generous in your regard, since you, more than your companions, are deprived of the joys of family life. And, if you no longer have the affectionate solicitude of a kind and loving father, or the tender and delightful caresses of a dear mother, you shall have, if you love Mary, the joy of the pure heart, the delights of celestial love, and the ineffable enjoyments of piety, which infinitely surpass those of nature.

How much more could I say, dear children, for your consolation? . . . . But I will confine myself to this thought:—The holy religion which we have the immense happiness of knowing and practising, teaches us that God Himself is the Protector of orphans, and that His providence assists them in a particular manner. It is written, in divers places in Holy Scripture, that He assumes their defense against injustice and oppression, and that He chastises severely all those who take advantage of their condition. Give yourself, then, to God, dear child, and banish fear and anxiety. Be good and pious. Show yourself grateful towards those who have taken

the place of your parents; and you will find that you shall have devoted protectors, whom God will inspire with a love most benevolent, an interest most tender in your regard.

Render all honor and respect to your guardian, who is more especially charged with the care of you; love him almost as a father, and when you shall have attained the age which will make you mistress of your fortune, and your affairs, continue to consult him, to testify the greatest regard for him.

Do not imitate those ungrateful wards, who inconsiderately accuse their guardians of having neglected their affairs, and who testify neither friendship nor gratitude for an administration which has often cost them much pain, and exacted of them many sacrifices.

It is surprising to see the bitterness with which some persons try to inspire wards with a distrust of their guardians. Do not listen to those evil counsels; they are inspired by the demon of discord and ingratitude, and, even were they just, you should sacrifice some slight interest, in gratitude for the care you should know how to appreciate. Nothing but a case of grave or manifest wrong, could excuse complaints or civil proceedings on your part.

Again, dear children, some among you are placed in a position in which the heart has often much to suffer. It is when a young girl, having lost her mother, is obliged to give her affection to a woman who lawfully takes in the house the rights of wife and mistress. It is not your place, in this circum-

stance more than in any other, to find fault with your father's will, or accuse him of being wanting in love and consideration for you. He may have reasons for doing so, of which you are ignorant; and sometimes a second marriage is indispensably necessary for the advantage of a young family. I know there are many persons who would make you view his conduct in an unfavorable light, who would excite you to murmurs and complaints. Do not hearken to them; prefer the happiness of possessing your father's love, to the wicked satisfaction of showing him your pain and disapprobation. Show your step-mother both love and respect; religion commands it, and your own peace of mind makes it a duty.

Generally speaking, there is too much unfavorable prejudice on the subject of those wives who have the courage to take charge of children not their own. I have known several, and have even had opportunities of closely observing and appreciating the care they have bestowed upon their husband's children. I can assure you that I have always found them to fulfil their duties with devotedness, and nevertheless, they were often calumniated and criticised. You will tell me, perhaps, that they have not the tenderness of one's own mother, their caresses are less affectionate, and one can perceive in them a greater love for their own children. I admit it; but why make this a crime? Is it possible to change a mother's heart? To ask it, would be to demand an impossibility. If your

father's wife, whom, in a feeling of spite you call *the stranger*, gives you all the attention you need; if she acts with you as with her own children in regard to your wants, you have no right to complain of her; on the contrary, you owe her much gratitude. *She* would certainly have reason to be indignant, were you to respond to her attentions only by coldness, indifference, or contempt, and *you* might, very justly, be called *an ingrate*.

But you, dear children, will not forget yourselves on this point; you will act in such a manner, with regard to your step-mothers, that you will conciliate their esteem and affection. You will be particularly careful not to take advantage of the ascendancy you may have over your father, to weaken the good understanding which should subsist between him and her whom he has given you as your second mother; you will never carry reports, or permit yourselves any complaint which might lead him to suspect that your step-mother treated you badly. It is only a case of open persecution or ill-treatment that could authorize you to complain and provoke explanations, often most fatal to the peace of families.

Those who have a step-father, should give him equal testimonies of affection; they should testify all the respect required by religion and propriety. It does not belong to them, any more than to those of whom I have just spoken, to rise against their mother or him with whom she has thought it well to contract a second marriage; for you, my dear children, should all infinitely respect the wishes of

the authors of your days, that is, when God is not thereby offended. Any murmuring, disapprobation, complaints, jealousy, or spite which you would manifest against them, even on occasions in which your heart would have much to suffer from their decisions, would be opposed to the divine law, and would draw upon you the maledictions of the Lord.

In fine, dear children, urged by the affection God has given me for you, I wish to address some words to those, who, having neither mother nor step-mother, must, after their education is completed, undertake the direction of the house, and charge themselves with a burden so much the heavier since they have no experience. I know that some are envious of this position, and I do not blame them for they have never looked at its difficulties. Their childish presumption or desire will soon cease, if they form a just idea of the duties imposed by the title of mistress of the house, and they will accept this title only through obedience to their father.

Your first duty, dear child, in such a position, is to watch carefully over yourself, so as to act in all things with that wisdom and prudence which your youth, alas! does not always allow. You should be more thoroughly pious, more sensible than those young girls who live under their mothers' directions. Your father, relying on your prudence, and believing that your education and the principles you imbibed in the convent, remove you from the shadow of danger, thinks it unnecessary to exercise over you much surveillance. He is, perhaps, often absent

attending to his business, so that you are sometimes whole days in your house, free to act as you please, to go and come according to your fancy, and to receive visits from any one you wish. Be on your guard, dear child; do not abuse that liberty which might be so fatal to your virtue.

Do not pay or receive any visit which your father would disapprove, or which might, in the slightest degree, compromise you in the eyes of the world; do not act inconsiderately; recommend yourself frequently to God and the Blessed Virgin, for you have special need of their protection.

Your second duty is to be always occupied in your house, and to respond to your father's confidence by preserving in it good order and economy. Attend yourself to every detail of receipts and expenditures; keep, if possible, an exact account of them; do not accustom yourselves to give money at every turn, without knowing how it is to be employed: negligence in this respect sometimes ruins the most brilliant fortunes.

In the third place, you should exercise over your servants a prudent, careful and enlightened surveillance, which is not always easy. Two extremes are to be avoided in your conduct regarding those employed in your house, viz., excessive severity and indiscreet indulgence,—too much severity and sharpness, and too great weakness and familiarity. Either of these defects might be productive of fatal consequences. By severity and haughtiness one provokes replies, murmurs, altercations; by familiarity, one

compromises one's authority, exposes one's self to be less respected, and one no longer finds, when occasion calls for it, that power she has allowed to be disregarded. You should choose a just medium between these two extremes. That wisdom—which God will bestow on you, notwithstanding your youth, if you pray for it as you should,—will teach you to preserve your authority without rendering it burdensome to your servants. The example of piety, charity, gentleness, patience, generosity, and all other virtues which you will give them, will exercise great influence over them, and you will be able, through the help of God, to accomplish this essential part of your duties.

In the fourth place, my dear child, you should, in the management of your house, follow in every point,—leaving out any question of offence to God—your father's wishes and intentions. You are not allowed to turn things to your own profit, or to recompense yourself for your solicitude. You must receive from your father what justice would seem to demand should be granted you more than to your brothers and sisters, in compensation for the trials and embarrassments you have had to endure. For the rest, dear child, you should esteem yourself happy to share his paternal solicitude, and should be infinitely grateful for the confidence your father reposes in you. His love for you and his other children, having hindered him from contracting a second alliance, know how to compensate him, and do not, by your want of respect and affection, or by

carelessness, give him cause for regret. Take particular care of his health, prevent his wishes, seek to please him in everything. Do not be repelled by any ill-humor he may sometimes manifest, nor by the disapprobation he may testify of your most innocent actions. Pass over those unpleasant moments and forget them; a father of a family has so many cares, that it is difficult for him to be always in the same humor.

Finally, dear child, although you may be invested with a kind of authority in your house, show yourself always respectful, dependent and submissive in regard to your father, and do not make your superiority be felt by your brothers or sisters, save in testimonies of affection. Be above them, particularly, by your virtue and prudence, and you will find no difficulty in obtaining from them complete deference and tender affection.





## CHAPTER IV.

### *DUTIES TO BROTHERS AND SISTERS.*

Motives for preserving fraternal love—Beauty of this love; its advantages—Several examples.

**I**F you have brothers and sisters, dear children, bless and thank God for this favor; a thousand times more precious than that paternal inheritance they will share with you. Nothing in the course of life is so sweet as fraternal love.

There shall come to you a sad, a sorrowful epoch, that in which death will rob you of your beloved parents. Ah! how sad, how desolate you would be in this world, were you then to have neither brother nor sister! One of the poets says:

“A brother is a friend by nature given.”

There exists, naturally, more love between brothers and sisters than between other friends. If you are not so unfortunate as to be the only child of your family, you will understand me, for you have but to consult your own heart. Your brothers and sisters are of the same blood with you, they have an equal right with you to your parents' love and solicitude. With them you spent the happy hours of your childhood; they were your friends, your playmates; you lived with them free from care and anxiety.

ety, and, if we except some moments of childish displeasure, produced by trifling quarrels soon made up, you could not be happy, separated from one another.

Why should those feelings become cold in proportion as you grow older? Why should a vile interest, an unhappy selfishness, break the ties which God Himself has formed? Strengthen, on the contrary, those precious bonds, and, for this end, be willing to make some sacrifice. Repress the sallies of your temper, weigh your words, in order to avoid every occasion of disagreement, of coldness, or antipathy. Learn to forget whatever may wound you, show every complacency, and yield willingly, so as to remove every pretext for breaking the good harmony which should reign amongst you. If you are the eldest, your brothers or sisters will love and esteem you the more; if you are the youngest, they will have for you greater love and kindness.

Cato of Utica, a celebrated Roman, being asked while yet a child, who was his best friend, replied: "My brother." "And, after him, whom do you love the best?" "My brother." "But after him?" "My brother," he still replied. They then ceased to question him, admiring such sentiments in so young a child.

Years did but increase his love for his brother. He never quitted him, obeyed him in all things, accompanied him everywhere, did nothing of importance without consulting him, and, at the age of twenty years, had never taken a meal outside the

house, or made any voyage unaccompanied by his brother.

Lead your brothers and sisters to virtue, as far as may be in your power. Were they to rebel against a just command, to allow themselves to utter disrespectful words, or go into doubtful company, warn them tenderly; above all, let your example serve as a model to them.

It would be unworthy of you to secretly turn the family property to your personal interest, or to try to obtain your parents' preference in this regard. Leave them wholly free to make their will as they judge best; far better would it be to lose everything, than to commit the least injustice. If your parents favor some particular member of the family, beware of jealousy, and do not, by an unfortunate disagreement, lose the happiness of living in perfect friendship with those so closely allied to you.

Ferdinand, King of Aragon, being at the point of death, begged Alphonsus, his elder son, whom he left heir of his crown, to allow John, the younger, to have the kingdom of Castile for his inheritance. "Father," replied Alphonsus, "the glory of obeying you, will always be dearer to me than my rights of primogeniture. If you judge that my brother will fill your place better than I, I consent that you give him your whole kingdom: I will follow your orders as I would those of God himself."

Peter Corneille, the celebrated poet, joined to rare genius many good qualities. He had a brother, Thomas Corneille, also a man of great merit,

although not of so much talent. Those two celebrated poets gave to the world the brightest, the greatest example of fraternal love. Thus strongly united, they espoused two sisters; both families dwelt in the same house, eat at the same table, and kept a common purse. After twenty-five years of married life, neither had dreamt of making a division of their property. This, in reality, was not done until after the death of the elder Corneille.

Sedaine, a literary man, well-known by his works, having, when about thirteen years old, lost his father at Berry, was much embarrassed as to how he and his younger brother should reach their mother, who was in Paris. His means were very limited, and he had no one to help him. He procured a place for his brother in a public conveyance, and followed himself on foot, as well as his strength permitted. It was winter; and the little child cried in the carriage with the cold. Sedaine, perceiving this, took off his coat to cover him. This touching tenderness drew the attention of the other travellers to the good brother. Every one offered to assist him, and the driver gave him a seat by his side. The child found his mother in a very destitute condition; he worked for her and his younger brother, and God blessed him; he became a man of great merit, and was beloved and esteemed throughout his life.

Although ambition and egoism are the common vices of our day, nevertheless one still sees, from time to time, beautiful traits of fraternal devotedness.

In a town of the department of Isere there lived,

a few years ago, an honest family. Their income was too small to support the children, of whom there were eight. When the ninth was born, the parents were very uneasy. "Be calm," said their eldest son who was about eighteen, "I charge myself with this little one; I will work and pay his nurse." The following year a little girl came to complete the decade. "She is mine," said the eldest daughter. "Mamma, I will free you from all anxiety about the babe." Both perfectly performed their duty to their charge, and everybody in the neighborhood spoke with admiration of the fraternal devotedness of the two young persons.





## CHAPTER V.

### *CONDUCT IN REGARD TO SERVANTS.*

To avoid familiarity—To speak mildly and kindly to them—To instruct them if they be ignorant of the truths of religion—Examples.

**I**f servants are employed in your family, you should, my children, treat them kindly, speak to them with affability, but never be familiar with them. Never give them a command except by your parents' orders. As regards yourself personally, dispense with their services, as far as possible; and be careful not to render yourselves ridiculous or exacting. Thank them in a few words, when they have rendered you a service, and never hold prolonged conversations with them; thus you will more easily win the regard and respect due to you.

Nevertheless, when an occasion presents itself, give them good advice, prevent or conceal their forgetfulness, in order to spare them reproof, and excuse their faults, when not malicious or dangerous; thus you will obtain their esteem, and they will pardon your being somewhat cold and reserved in their regard.

Never make them your confidants, never charge them with secret commissions, or confide to them your projects, or what concerns your conscience; if you do, you may afterwards have great reason to repent your indiscretion.

Should one of them have the boldness to speak to you in an unbecoming manner, to bring you certain messages, or try to corrupt your heart by such means as are suggested by the devil and his agents, fear not to reprove them severely, and to threaten them, in case of repetition, to have them expelled from the house.

If you discover some grave disorder in their conduct, warn your parents, for you must not allow God to be offended with impunity.

I think it unnecessary, my children, to warn you to be still more reserved with persons of the other sex, who may be in the service of your family. Have as little to do with them as possible. When obliged to speak to them, let it be in few words, and in a grave tone. Forgetfulness of these rules might be productive of fatal consequences to a young girl's reputation.

If any of your maids be ignorant of the principal truths of faith, you should apply yourself to instruct them. You might even do this, but never without witness, for the other domestics; this work of charity would be very pleasing to God. I have known several young ladies who practised this every Sunday, and the result was a sensible improvement in the conduct of their servants.

One among them had undertaken to banish swearing and blasphemy from among the servants of her family. Going one day to visit them during their labors, she heard one of them utter an angry oath.

"You have, then, forgotten," said she, approaching him, "what I said to you about swearing?" "No, Miss," replied the man, "but I did not know you were there." "Unhappy man," replied the young girl, "you are afraid of my hearing you, because I have threatened to have you sent from the house, and you care not if your good angel hears you; he who will accuse you before God! . . . . What is more, Almighty God himself hears you, and will exclude you from heaven, if you do not correct yourself." "Miss," replied the servant, "I never thought of that; I assure you, I will swear no more." And he kept his word.

When any one desired to take service in her parents' house, this young lady, who by her virtue and intelligence had acquired much esteem and a well-merited ascendancy, always made it a condition that he should not swear, or blaspheme the holy name of God. By this vigilance, she succeeded in banishing this crime from her house.

See, my children, that your domestics have time to fulfil their Christian duties; ask your parents to give them leisure for this purpose. They will the better discharge their other duties.

Finally, if they be sick, interest yourself in their condition; even wait on them, if you can do so with-

out inconvenience; excite them to patience, suggest to them thoughts of faith that may render their sufferings meritorious, and act in such a way, that your domestics may be able to say that you are, in their regard, angels of goodness and charity.





## CHAPTER VI.

### *HOW A YOUNG LADY SHOULD BE OCCUPIED AT HOME.*

No one is exempt from the law of labor—Those not obliged to labor should work for the poor, and for the adornment of the holy Altar—Maria Leckzinska, and a pious young lady—One should be occupied in accordance with the wishes of one's parents—Beautiful example.

**I**F, my children, you are favored with the gifts of fortune, if, by your parents' position, you are not obliged to labor, do not think you may lose your time, or fritter it in trifling pursuits. When the Lord gave to the first man the commandment of labor, he gave it to all his posterity without exception; every one shall have to render a rigorous account of his time, and to expiate in the other life, every moment he has lost.

Be, then, always well and usefully employed; thus you will obey God and avoid falling into vice, of which idleness is called the mother.

If you have nothing to do, either for yourself or your parents, labor to clothe the poor, or to ornament altars. Join those pious associations formed for the purpose of making clothing for orphans, and teaching them the Christian Doctrine, when they have

no opportunity of learning it. The blessings of those poor children will bring happiness to you, and in the good you do them, you will find more consolation than all worldly festivities could give you.

The ordinary occupation of the pious queen, Maria Leckzinska, was to work for the poor, with the princesses, her daughters. Poor persons might often be seen coming from her apartments, laden with the garments she had made for them. At Versailles, and all places in which there was a royal mansion, she visited the hospitals, went to the sick women's beds, and exhorted them to patience: such was the most agreeable pastime of this pious princess.

A young lady of our acquaintance wrote to one of her friends as follows:

"You wish to know how I spend my time in the country; be not uneasy, I am not at all lonesome. In place of those wearisome visits and receptions of city life, I go with mamma to see the curé of the village, and ask his advice as to what it would be best to do for the poor, and for the adornment of his little church.

"Aided by mamma's seamstress, I have already made many under-garments, dresses, aprons, and pretty little bonnets for the poor children of the Sisters' school. Would you believe it?—I have even made an alb, beautifully embroidered at the bottom, for the feast of All-Saints. There was only one in the sacristy, and that of very coarse linen. Out of my pocket-money I have bought pretty muslin to cover the candlesticks, which are wooden, and ugly

enough to frighten one. We hope soon to procure better ones.

"I assure you, my dear friend, that I find great pleasure in this occupation. I think that I am working for our Lord, and helping the Blessed Virgin to make the seamless robe He wore for so many years."

These sentiments are admirable. My children, what do you think God reserves for one who knows so well how to employ her leisure moments? Most certainly He will load her with more precious gifts than those of the fortune she already possesses, and of which she makes such good use.

As for you, my children, who may not possess so brilliant a fortune, believe me, you are not the less favored by Divine Providence. You, also, can do good to those around you, particularly by good example, and thus render yourselves very pleasing to God. How much disgust and weariness, how much constraint does your modest position spare you! The brilliancy of equipage, dress and parties of pleasure, hides great deceptions and much bitterness; be not envious of them.

You live in the midst of ease and convenience; you have necessities in abundance:—what more do you need to make you happy? If you are obliged to maintain this competency by labor, why should you complain? Labor makes time pass pleasantly, it preserves health, it even strengthens the intellectual faculties, which too much rest enervates and enfeebles.

Cheerfully, then, perform your part; be employed in your house according to your wants, your capacity, and your parents' wishes.

It sometimes happens that young ladies, on leaving those houses of education in which their parents had placed them at the cost of many great sacrifices, show repugnance to certain domestic occupations which seem to them low and common. They falsely imagine that their education dispenses them from the obligation of helping their mothers, and they leave them to do the housework, while they occupy themselves in fancy work or light reading. Such conduct is revolting, my children; you will not imitate it.

In giving you an education, it was not your parents' intention that you should become indolent and useless; neither they nor your teachers could conceive, that, in proportion as your mind was adorned and improved, your heart would become inflated with a foolish pride that would lead you to despise your condition.

Be employed then, at home, under your mother's direction, in such a way that they may rejoice at having made some sacrifice for your improvement; give them the consolation of seeing you at once well-informed, pious, and industrious.

In families where there are several daughters, it is customary for the mother to teach them, in turn, the duties of housekeeping. Agree to this willingly; later in life you will be thankful for your knowledge of such matters. Over and above this, each one

assumes the charge of some particular department, such as to keep the linen in order, to see to the cleanliness and good order of the house, to take care of the younger children, to keep account of the receipts and expenditures, etc. . . Perform willingly, and as well as you can, whatever your parents desire in this respect. It is but just that you make some recompense for all they have done for you.

If your mother be aged, infirm, or delicate, you should, my children, redouble your activity to withdraw from her as far as possible, the care and labor attendant on the care of the house. How happy, then, will be those good mothers! With what joy will they thank God for having given them children so attentive, so affectionate, so grateful! Their blessings will accompany you throughout your life, and draw upon you the abundant graces of God.

Gustavus III., King of Sweden, while riding through a village perceived a young girl drawing water, and he asked her for a drink. The young girl presented him the water with artless and touching grace.

"Beautiful child," said the prince to her, "if you will follow me to Stockholm, I will procure you an honorable alliance." "It is impossible for me to accept your proposition," replied the young peasant; "my mother, who is poor and sick, has none but me to console her; nothing in the world could prevent me from accomplishing this duty." "Where is your mother?" "In that wretched cabin." The king entered it, and beheld, lying on a little straw, a

woman weighed down with infirmities. Moved at the sight, the prince exclaimed: "Ah, poor woman! how I pity you!" "Alas!" replied the sick woman, "I should be more to be pitied were it not for my daughter, who, by her labor and care, tries to comfort me and prolong my life. May God bless and reward her," added she, bursting into tears. Gustavus, deeply moved, was perhaps never so sensible to the pleasure of being elevated to supreme rank as in that moment, in which he could comfort the unfortunate. Giving a purse to the young villager, he said: "Continue to take care of your mother. I will soon procure you the means of better doing so." On his return to Stockholm, the monarch settled on the poor mother an annual pension, reversible, at her death, to her daughter, who was thus recompensed for her filial piety.





## PART THIRD.

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### THE DUTIES OF YOUNG LADIES OUTSIDE THEIR FAMILY.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### *DUTIES TO FORMER TEACHERS.*

Gratitude—Love—Delicate attentions and generous offers on particular occasions—Several examples.

**Y**OU would be very ungrateful, dear children, were you ever to forget what you owe to those who have had charge of your education. Nor should you be content with entertaining sentiments of gratitude in the depths of your heart; you should seek occasions for expressing it outwardly.

You cannot imagine how deeply a teacher feels the indifference of certain pupils, who, upon their return home, cease all intercourse with her, and regard her only as a stranger. This coldness pains her, because she feels so great love for those whom she formerly called *her children*, and has so deep an interest in their welfare, that she is really grieved, when, in return for her care, she receives only ingratitude.

During several years your teachers, dear children, bore a heavy responsibility in your regard; your parents relied on their solicitude, their experience, their watchfulness, their tenderness. Theirs was the task of correcting your defects, of forming your hearts, adorning your minds, taking care of your health. It was often necessary for them to combat your passions, caprices, and dislikes; to bear with the lightness or oddities of your disposition, and, perhaps, even with very unbecoming behavior on your part. Nothing repelled them. At the price of their repose, nay, even of their health, they accomplished the task imposed by God, a task which devotedness alone could lead them to accept.

To their zeal and teachings you owe the amiable qualities and useful knowledge which render you praiseworthy in the eyes of the world: to their advice, instructions, encouragement and example are you indebted for the piety which renders you dear to God, which, more than all other things, will constitute the happiness of your life.

Think not, that because your family paid the required annual pension, you owe no other acknowledgment. The virtue, learning and talents acquired by such cares, claim another tribute—that of sincere gratitude.

Whatever may be your age, whatever your position in society, if you count gratitude in the list of your obligations, you will never remain indifferent in regard of your teachers; you will inquire about their health, will visit them, will offer them marks

of your attachment, will be pleased to receive their advice.

Mme. de Maintenon relates of herself, that, during upwards of twenty years, she maintained an active correspondence with a religieuse who had been her teacher. Being already established in the world, she made a journey of more than fifty leagues, expressly to see once again that religieuse for whom she always preserved a great esteem and lively gratitude.

When, at the beginning of the French Revolution, religious were forced to quit their holy retreats and return to the world, many, having no longer any relations, found themselves without an asylum, but none were abandoned; generous and benevolent souls received them, and provided for their wants. Those who belonged to teaching communities, found, for the most part, an honorable hospitality with former pupils, who esteemed themselves happy in being able to return, in part, the attentions they had received in their childhood. We knew one of those venerable instructresses. She belonged to the order of the *Annunciades*. Being expelled from her convent with her companions, she was received, with touching affection by a young lady, whom, as mistress of the writing class, she had taught at the convent-school. An order being afterwards given for the imprisonment of religious, this generous lady, finding it impossible to conceal her teacher from the rigid searches of the government emissaries, provided her with linen and clothing for the

time of her detention. The prison designated was in Lyons: thither those holy religious were taken on carts. Some compassionate women, seeing them pass, said to them: "Good ladies, have courage! you will not be so badly off there; we will take work to you, and will pay well for it." They reached the prison in the evening, and to restore them after their great fatigues, they had fifteen chestnuts apiece. At almost every repast they were served in like manner. They were, in all, sixteen religious of different orders, but charity made them all of one heart. The religious of the Annunziata placed in common the linen and garments provided by her benefactress; she did the same with the provisions of all kinds, sent from Vienne every week by her generous pupil. Her mattress served for the most infirm (some of them were very old); the others lay on a little straw. A priest on one occasion gained access to their prison. He heard their confessions, offered up the Holy Sacrifice, and strengthened them by the Holy Communion. At times, their jailers were kind enough to allow them to hold communication with their friends; several were even enabled to escape; the Annunziata, above-mentioned, was of this number. She left, disguised as a servant-girl, and returned to her benefactress, who kept her with her, provided for all her wants, and settled on her an annual pension.

In 1848, a time when great changes were agitating France, serious fears were entertained for religion and the communities. Several former pupils of a

religious house, wrote to one of the mistresses who had no relatives to receive her. They invited her, in case of the dreaded catastrophe, to come and live with them, offering her, at the same time, every service of friendship and gratitude. One of those letters ran as follows:

"How happy should I be, my beloved teacher, were you to do me the favor of choosing my house as an asylum. Elsewhere you would, doubtless, find more wealth and elegance, but, most assuredly, you would nowhere find a heart more loving, more devoted. I place at your disposal a small apartment, very suitable for you, being the most retired in the house, for I know your love of solitude. You can remain there as long as you wish; no one will disturb you, and it shall be only with permission that I will go to spend a few moments with you. As to my room and other apartments, you may come to them whenever you wish. For the rest, I will provide for all your wants, but I feel I shall never be able to repay you a hundredth part of what I owe you. Do not fear that you will be unwelcome to my husband; on the contrary, he said to me the other day, that you would draw the blessing of God on our home, and that he would be happy to render you any service. He is not a *devotee*, but he is not hostile to religion.

"What a happiness for me, dear Sister, could I possess you! I might almost be tempted to bless the revolution that would procure me that advantage; but, then, I would be seeking my own satis-

faction, rather than yours. May our Lord avert the storm, and preserve you in your beloved retreat! Some time I will go to see you, and take with me my daughter, not yet two years' old. I hope, Sister, that you will love her as you love her mother; when she is older, I shall confide her to your care."

It is a beautiful thing, my children, to have such sentiments, and it is very sweet to a teacher to find them in her pupils. Certainly you all have them in your hearts, and were Divine Providence to subject your mistresses to a cruel trial, you would be most happy to give them proof of your devotedness, for gratitude is the daughter of wisdom and piety. Let us hope that God will avert from those pious asylums in which you have received so much care, so many lessons of virtue, the storms that have sometimes swept over others, and that you shall only have an opportunity of testifying your gratitude to your instructresses in the manner I have before indicated.

You will testify it, then, in always speaking well of their establishment, and of the care they lavished on you. Remember that persons who speak disparagingly of the institution in which they were brought up and instructed, are wanting in propriety, and give reason to suspect that their conduct, while at school, was not satisfactory. Everybody knows that docile and industrious pupils are beloved by their teachers, and do not, ordinarily, draw on themselves those reprimands and punishments which excite the discontent of the idle and the disobedient.



## CHAPTER II.

### *CONDUCT TOWARDS THE FRIENDS OF YOUR FAMILY AND TOWARDS STRANGERS.*

To be agreeable with every one—Never show resentment—Remarkable example—To preserve perfect equality of temper before strangers and your family—To render to each the honor and deference due him—Never follow your humor and caprice.

**Y**OU should, my children, act with kindness and gentleness, not only towards your own family, but also towards those who may visit you, or whom business may bring to your house.

For this purpose, endeavor to acquire perfect evenness of temper; learn to restrain and hide your feelings in presence of certain persons, whose manner of acting, either in your regard or that of your parents, may have been unbecoming. Christian charity obliges you to pardon all; propriety and self-respect require you to avoid explanations in which you might show too much vivacity.

Remember, on every occasion, that God has commanded us to forget injuries, and to pardon our enemies. This law, which seems hard at first sight, becomes sweet and easy, when one casts a glance on the crucifix. At the sight of a God of goodness who pardoned His murderers, who pardons our

offences, whenever we ask Him, could we preserve resentment? O my children, how sweet, how easy is this precept, when one loves God! If your heart revolt at it, pray, implore the aid of grace, and you will obtain, with the courage to forgive, a peace, an interior joy a thousand times preferable to the cruel satisfaction of hatred and vengeance.

Say not, that there are certain circumstances, in which it is impossible to vanquish one's resentment. Nothing is impossible to grace; pray, and you can do everything. Besides, you know that God will forget our offences only inasmuch as we forget those of our neighbor; we say this every day when we recite the "Our Father." See in what a position you place yourself, if you preserve rancor, antipathy, or hatred against any one! . . . .

A pious widow, named Huneau, gave during the Revolution, an admirable example of generous forgiveness. She had an only son about fifteen years of age. This child, who was devoted to the royalist cause, had not, on account of his youth, been able to take up arms, but he served his party in every possible way. The revolutionists made him pay the price of his devotedness.

One evening, as he was returning from a journey, he was shot down when only a few steps from his mother, who was going to meet him. The unfortunate mother could do nothing; her son was dead. . .

It seemed to her, at first, that she had lost everything; but the remembrance of the Blessed Virgin at the foot of the cross, gave her strength. She

wept, but she also prayed; she resigned herself, she pardoned! . . .

Shortly after this fatal event, it was rumored in the neighborhood that a furious *terrorist* had been seized with a frightful malady. It was said that his frenzy, his cries of rage, his blasphemies, in particular, had rendered him an object of horror even to his own family.

Madame Huneau shuddered at the name of the wretched man, but strengthened by one of those generous resolutions which Heaven alone can inspire, she went to his dwelling, and approached his bedside. At the sound of her voice, the dying man, seized with a kind of madness, cried out: "What brings that woman? Does she come to laugh at my torments? . . . Let her go away from here; she owes me nothing but hatred! . . . There is for me neither pity nor mercy; I am damned! Even God himself could not save me!" . . . "What do you say, wretched man?" exclaimed the pious lady. "Ah! cease to blaspheme the goodness of God. He brings me here to-day to pardon you—you, who killed my son; and He desires to pardon you himself. Repent; it is all that He asks."

That wicked heart was touched. The man became converted, and the heroic woman thus obtained a recompense worthy of her charity. A priest lay concealed in the neighborhood; at the peril of her life, she brought him to the dying man, who became reconciled with God by a good confession. He lived eight days longer, during which the mother

of his victim lavished on him every attention she could have given her own son.

Cordiality, sweetness and evenness of temper should distinguish a young lady. Those virtues wonderfully dispose her to the practice of that Christian charity which our Divine Master has so strongly recommended; but there is one fault essentially opposed to that beautiful virtue, and against which one should continually guard: it is susceptibility.

One often meets with young ladies, otherwise good enough, who are guilty of this fault, the effect of excessive self-love. They allow themselves to be disturbed by mere nothings. They give way to an extreme sensibility, cry and pout for whole days, because somebody has forgotten or neglected a trifle to which they attached importance. Then no one dare approach them; everybody is made to feel their ill-humor; even strangers perceive it; they are cold and silent; their countenance bears the impress of the displeasure they feel, so that one would think they had been very badly treated.

The consequence is, that, very often, those young ladies give people a very bad opinion of their character, and pass, in the eyes of those who see them in such a state, for persons ill-tempered and hard to please, which may not be always true.

Other young ladies take quite the opposite course. They are affable, polite, and engaging even to excess, in presence of strangers; their air becomes joyous, their manners amiable, their words full of kindness,

they are disposed to leave everything to oblige them. Were one to judge them by those seductive appearances, one would take them to be the most perfect beings in the world.

Unhappily, the scene changes as soon as the strangers have taken their leave; and in their relations with their family there is nothing but grumbling, ill-humor, unbecoming exactions. They will not inconvenience themselves on any account, will help no one; are offended at everything and everybody, and are insupportable, (if I may be allowed the word,) to their own family.

You understand, my children, how improper is such behavior, and hence you should conclude that it is of the utmost importance to preserve towards every one, and on all occasions, becoming respect.

In your own family show unalterable kindness and charity; let not the habit of seeing them and speaking with them lead you to take any liberty injurious to the respect due to your parents, the friendship you owe your brothers and sisters, or the politeness you should preserve in your relations with your servants.

You should always be polite and kind towards strangers; it is necessary, however, to have regard to circumstances and persons. The friends of your parents, those who habitually frequent your house, have a right to greater attention and more regard on your part; as for strangers and casual visitors, it suffices that you be obliging and polite. You may be more familiar, more open with young persons of

your own age and rank, but you should preserve an extreme reserve with young men who are received at your house, even when they are your relations.

The sentiment of propriety joined to the common sense and reason which should guide you in every thing, should make you understand, my children, better than I can tell you, in what cases you should be more or less obliging, or more or less reserved in your relations with your neighbor. Hence you should reflect, and not allow yourself to be led by your impressions. Such a young person, for example, will receive very coldly a friend of her father, because his manner or appearance displeases her; that friend will be offended, and will, perhaps, break with the family, which may, perhaps, have need of his friendship.

Another will be very cordial with a young girl or woman, of light or doubtful behavior, whose conversation and manners pleases her; she will engage her to visit her more frequently, without being aware that she may compromise her own reputation, and that she will oblige her parents, later on, to forbid that person the house.

Reflect, moderate your susceptibility and impetuosity; do not expose yourselves to those inconveniences, and you will not forget what you owe to others, and what you owe to yourselves.



### CHAPTER III.

#### *DUTIES TOWARDS THE POOR AND UNFORTUNATE.*

Not to envy the rich—To give alms according to one's means—To console the poor through supernatural motives, that one may have merit before God—Picture of an unfortunate family—Some examples of edifying charity.

**I**P to this time, my children, you might have been pardoned for having appeared indifferent, perhaps, when you heard the unfortunate spoken of. Accustomed to the most delicate attentions, surrounded by everything that could render life agreeable, you could scarcely have imagined that others were deprived of these things. But were you now to show such carelessness and indifference at the sight of those who are in want, your insensibility would be very culpable. I believe it unnecessary, my children, to combat any such disposition in you; on the contrary, I think that the advice I am about to give, will only strengthen the happy dispositions of your hearts, naturally inclined to tender pity.

You find yourselves on the great theatre of the world, and can behold what passes therein. On one side are displayed the splendors of wealth and

luxury; turn away your eyes, lest such seductive appearances excite your envy, and make you lose the peace you taste in the midst of a happy competency. On the other side, misery and poverty reveal themselves; on these should you fix your gaze, to thank the Lord for the goods He has given you, and to move your heart, by the sight of the sufferings of your fellow-beings.

But do not confine yourself to sterile sentiments. Give to the poor and miserable some of the benefits Providence has lavished on you. In no better way can you testify your gratitude; nor is there a surer means of obtaining greater gifts. Sometimes it requires but very little to relieve great misery. Some bread, a few garments, a few pieces of money, may soothe tedious suffering, hinder many murmurs against God, often, even prevent the effects of despair, provoked by a woe without alleviation.

Alas! my children, while you are perhaps making an extravagant display of luxury, how many unfortunate beings are destitute of the necessities of life! Imitate the pious princess Maria Leckzinska, afterwards Queen of France. In her youth, she was very fond of jewels. The merchants, aware of this, never failed to display before her, when she walked abroad, the richest ornaments they had on hands. The princess stopped before the shops, but knowing her weakness, she made it a rule always to defer till the morrow the purchase of an object that pleased her, and very often she deprived herself of it entirely. On one occasion she was heard to exclaim: "It is

too dear; I have too many dresses, and our poor are in want even of under-clothing."

"One day," writes M. l'abbé Mullois, "some one spoke of a very poor family, in presence of a young child who was about to make her First Communion. She also had a liking for dress and vanity, and held in precious reserve a twenty-franc piece, the first of a sum destined to purchase a bracelet. At the recital of such misery, her heart was deeply moved, and her mother said: 'Well, my child, what are you going to do? How much will you give?' She unhesitatingly replied: 'I will give all; I no longer wish for a bracelet; it would give me remorse every time I should look at it.' Things were arranged so that in the end she gave only five francs.

"Another child," continues M. Mullois, "about sixteen years old, did even better. At her age, a young girl already desires to please, and her imagination rarely finds things too beautiful. She had seen a very handsome mantilla, and had made up her mind to purchase it. The next day, she went to hear a sermon on Charity, in which it was said, that, in order to aid the poor, one should rob vanity. The sermon came very inopportunistically for the mantilla. The young lady said to herself: 'This is a good opportunity; a more simple mantilla will do, and I shall have something left to give in alms.' Her resolution was kept, and the poor found themselves so much the richer. Behold a good way to employ money. . . . But after all, money is not indispensable for the exercise of charity. The poor

are in want of so many things—clothing in particular.” . . . .

St. Martin, while yet a soldier, having no money, cut his cloak in two and gave half to a poor man, who was almost naked. As for you, my child, do not imitate him in this; it is not allowed you to do so. What would your mother say if she saw you coming into the house with a half of your cloak on? She would be displeased; do not give her this reason; perhaps you give her many others. But what you should do, is, to take good care of your clothes and other little things; when they are no longer suitable for you, make them into a little package, and take them to the poor.

The good King Louis XII., surnamed *the Father of the People*, wore his doublets broken at the elbow, in order to spare the money of his subjects. Now times are changed; custom no longer permits the wearing of torn clothes, but, at least, be careful to give them to the poor.

Let your alms, my children, be accompanied with words of sweetness and charity. It is cruel to add bitter reproaches to the help, often very insufficient, which is given to the unfortunate.

Have, also, Christian intentions in comforting them. Do not give alms in order to follow your natural sensibility, or to be remarked or praised; this would be to lose all merit before God. Do it to please God, to obey His precept, and always behold our Lord in the person of the poor. He regards as done to Himself whatever is done for the unfortunate through His love.

You will, sometimes, meet with persons who, though not precisely in indigence, are, none the less, in great want. You should find some means of aiding them without putting them to the blush; the goodness of your heart, the delicacy of your sentiments, will render you ingenious on this point.

You will, perhaps, sometimes hear much plausible reasoning to prove that misery is the consequence of vice. Do not hastily adopt such ideas. Leave God to judge whether the poor be more or less worthy of your compassion, and never refuse to relieve, according to your means, the misery you may meet with. If you can give but a little, give that little; God, who sees your good will, will reward you for it.

Here is an act which reminds us of the widow of the Gospel, so much praised by our Lord.

In a mission of the East, a pious bishop recommended a young orphan girl to the generosity of the faithful. Every one brought an offering, according to his means, and the prelate was astonished at the amount of the collection, which surpassed his expectations. After the Holy Sacrifice, while he was making his thanksgiving, an old woman, whose poverty was well known, and who, leaning on a stick, was accustomed to beg from door to door, came timidly forward. She held in her hand a *para* (a Turkish coin), which she offered to the prelate, saying: "I beg you to receive this for the good work; the crowd hindered me from giving with the others."

How touching it is to see a poor beggar give from her own necessities for the relief of a want, perhaps less than her own! What a lesson to those who will not give, even from their superfluity!

It often happens, my children, that persons do not give, because they will not take the trouble to ascertain the wants of the poor. Some avoid looking at beggars, as if afraid of being touched by their misery. What do I say? . . . . . Some even yield to disgust, through a cruel excess of delicacy, and disdainfully turn their heads aside when brought in contact with great misery! . . . . . Remember, my children, the wicked rich man in the Gospel. Our Lord does not say that he was ambitious, avaricious, revengeful or unchaste; he left poor Lazarus at his gate, he regarded not his destitution; he did not invite him to eat the crumbs that fell from his table: for this was he precipitated into hell.

"You know not, my children," writes M. Mullois, "you know not what is being endured around you this day by millions of women, and little children like yourselves. It is frightful! frightful! Look at that unhappy man, that miserable father of a family, who spends at the tavern the fruit of his labor, and meanwhile, in his home, his aged father groans, his mother is heart-broken, his wife weeps, his shivering little children ask their mother for bread, while she has not a morsel to give them. . . . . Yes, this day, in our own land, millions of women and children are in this condition. . . . Poor children, poor wife, what a Sunday evening! . . . There she is, in her wretched

dwelling, without fire, without bread; surrounded by her children who sleep, but who from time to time are aroused by the pangs of hunger; she waits, she waits on, and time is so long when one is waiting! . . . 'It is ten o'clock,' she says, 'and he is not here! . . . It is midnight, and I hear nothing! . . . . It is two o'clock, and still he has not come! . . . . My God, where is he? . . . He will have spent all! What will he do to me? what will become of us?'

"Ah, cruel deception! In other days, in her girlhood's dreams, in her aspirations after happiness, she had, doubtless, said more than once: 'Some day, I, also, shall have my house, my husband, and my children; they will love me, and I will love them, and we shall be happy together, particularly on Sundays, when we shall all be united around the common table.' Unfortunate woman! behold the end of your dreams of happiness! . . . . You have not even bread; nay, you do not want it for yourself, you have your sorrow to feed upon, your tears to drink;—but your children, your poor children! . . . .

"There is another misfortune, also worthy of your compassion. You have a mother, my child; she loves you, and you love her very much. O, what a blessing it is to have a mother! A mother, a good mother is almost the whole felicity of life! . . . . Remember that there are on earth, many unhappy children who have no longer a mother, who are poor and orphaned. No mother gathers them around her in the evening and covers them with kisses; she is dead, and as she cast her dying look upon them, her

last words were, 'Alas, who will take care of my children? . . . . My God, take pity on my children!'. . .

"Ah! dear angel, give, give much; you can do so; give, that those orphans may not be abandoned, that they may have some one to think of them, to love them, to replace their mother, if it be possible.

"And when your own mother shall be sick, when death shall threaten to rob you of her, you will pray at the foot of her bed, you will remind God that you have been kind to His orphans; you will promise to do still more, and your prayer will ascend to heaven.

"You, my child, who are increasing in years, who will soon enter society, never forget the poor. Without doubt, your position will often oblige you to attend the festivities of the world. Amidst the prodigalities of luxury, the floods of light and harmony, still sometimes cast a thought on the unfortunate; think that in the same city, the same street, near that very house, perhaps, God beholds another spectacle. . . . It is an attic open to every wind, the snow covers its roof; it is as cold as a graveyard vault. Therein is enacted a scene, such, alas, as is but too common. In one corner sleep little children, who lie closer and closer together to keep themselves warm; on the remains of a bed lies an emaciated woman, the skin of her hands and throat seems glued to the bones; she is ill, she, a poor widow, ill from fatigue and sorrow, because, since her husband's death, her labor has been insufficient to support her family. Before her stands her eldest daughter, as young as yourself, who is watching over her mother,

after a day in which she had labored fifteen hours to earn fifteen cents. She offers her a cup of water to refresh her parched throat, and the mother, having tasted it, pushes it away, saying, 'It is too cold; it will makeme worse; it freezes me. I want something to refresh me, and we have no money to buy anything. My God! what misery! Your father is happy! would that I were with him!' . . . .

"The young girl, falling on her mother's bed, clasps her wasted hand, and covering it with tears and kisses, says: 'Ah, mother, why do you speak thus? . . . . You rob me of my remaining strength; I shall not have courage to work, now that I know that my labor cannot procure you relief. My dear mother, have confidence; we shall not always be so unfortunate, God is good; He will not abandon us. There are still some good souls on earth: perhaps we shall meet one of them.'

"My child, be this good soul, be this consoling angel. Go to this poor family; aid them with money from your purse, and kind words from your heart; listen to the history of their misfortunes, promise to return; and when you shall have left, that young girl, again casting herself into her mother's arms, will say: 'You see, I was right; there are still some compassionate souls. God has not abandoned us.' And both will exclaim: 'Ah! that good young lady! May God bless her!'"

I will add no reflection, my children, to those real and striking pictures of the misery which reigns in so many families in our very midst. May your

young souls be moved by them, and may you be powerfully excited to comfort those unfortunate families.

It is unnecessary, I think, to recommend you never to forget the consideration due to persons deprived of sight, hearing, etc. You know that in presence of a blind person it would be unbecoming to vaunt the blessings of light. With a person deprived of hearing, you should take delicate means of making yourself heard; instead of making your voice loud and shrill, speak only a little louder than usual, and articulate very distinctly. To presume to laugh and jest at the false interpretations and mistakes occasioned by deafness, would be a grave fault against politeness.

If you hear a person afflicted with stuttering, or some other defect in pronunciation, seem not to perceive it; with much stronger reason, you should never permit yourself the slightest allusion or injurious mimicry in regard to their infirmity.

Finally, do not forget, that kindness of heart, as well as politeness, absolutely forbids the very appearance of jesting on any natural deformity, before one who might believe himself the object of it. If any one commit such a fault in your presence, testify, by your silence, that you take no part therein.





## CHAPTER IV.

### *OF FRIENDSHIPS.*

A young person may have friends. It is necessary to make a good choice—Saint Victoria and Saint Anatolia—Dangers of worldly friendships—St. Francis de Sales' advice on this subject—Dreadful example, related by Saint Ligouri.

IT is natural to us, dear children, to love and to desire to be loved; nay, this passion is so strong that the love of our parents and relations does not satisfy our desires, and sometimes, we imprudently extend very much the circle of our affections. This is a subtle snare, by which the enemy of our salvation seeks to divert us from the love we owe to God. He knows that when our heart is attached to too many creatures, or even to one inordinately, it is not so much given to the Creator.

Nevertheless, my children, all friendship outside one's family is not forbidden; we may even find great advantages therein, on certain occasions; but it is necessary that our friends be well chosen.

I believe you to be too pious, too desirous of preserving, in all its lustre, the beautiful virtue of modesty, to think it necessary to warn you against friendships evidently bad and dangerous. I would only remind you here, my children, that, until such

time as your parents think of settling you in the world, you should, with the utmost care, avoid intimacies with persons of the other sex. Interviews, letters, presents, are snares so gross, that you cannot misapprehend them; if you forget yourself on this point only once, you will have gone far on the road to evil, and will have prepared for yourself many regrets.

“Love every one with a great love of charity,” says St. Francis de Sales,\* “but form no friendships, save with those who can communicate virtuous things.” That is to say, my children, that we should link ourselves in particular friendship only with persons capable of leading us to good, by their discourses and examples. Now it is seldom easy to meet with such souls, hence one must examine well before making a choice.

Be not seduced by an agreeable exterior, by natural graces and pleasing conversation: a person who should please you only by those vain externals, would not be worthy of your friendship. Look to regularity of conduct, good sense, piety, and qualities of the heart; these alone should determine your choice.

Friendship once established, preserve fidelity to your friends; do not break with them for trifles; be not over-nice, susceptible, or jealous. In your relations with them, do not fail in the rules of politeness; you may, however, be somewhat familiar with them. By familiarity, my children, I mean a little *abandon*,

\* Introduction to a Devout Life.

openness of heart, a delightful freedom; but this must always be accompanied by the most exact modesty.

St. Victoria and St. Anatolia may be cited as models of holy friendship, and my young readers will not, I think, be displeased to find their history here.

They belonged to distinguished families of the city of Tivoli, a short distance from Rome. With those virtues which form the Christian virgin, Victoria united a brilliant beauty, and the graces of a noble and majestic figure. Anatolia was not inferior to her, as regards those brilliant qualities; but it would seem that she surpassed her in fervor, and that God made use of her, to withdraw Victoria from a snare into which she would, perhaps, have fallen.

The two saints were sought after by the wealthiest suitors from the capital of the empire, but their virtue and piety suffered no diminution from the flattering homage which they received. They often met to mutually excite each other to persevere in the service of God. Sometimes they prayed together, and their hearts, so strictly united, were strengthened in fervor, and the desire to advance continually in the practice of virtue. Anatolia, in particular, experienced in her soul a truly celestial ardor. The goodness, sanctity, sweetness and adorable perfections of the Son of God made man, inflamed her with vehement love; and in one of those moments in which her soul overflowed with joy, in contemplating the Divine Object so dear to her heart, she made a vow of chastity; from that time the celestial flame which

consumed her for the Spouse of Virgins, increased from day to day.

Meanwhile, the parents of the two saints were preparing everything for their nuptials. A young pagan nobleman named Eugenius was presented to Victoria. His protestations of devotedness, and his flattering promises pleased the young girl, and believing, from the young man's gentle and polished appearance, that it would be easy to draw him to the knowledge of the truth, she did not reject the proposals offered her.

Anatolia coming in the evening to see her, Victoria told her of what had been arranged between her parents and the Lord Eugenius. Her friend listened in silence, and, while the young betrothed enthusiastically enumerated the qualities, wealth, and titles of him with whom she was to unite her destiny, only sighs escaped Anatolia's breast.

When Victoria had ceased to speak, the young virgin exclaimed:

"Alas! dear friend, what is all that, compared with the riches, grandeur and perfections of our Lord Jesus Christ! . . . . . As for me, I have renounced every earthly alliance to attach myself to the celestial Spouse, and to enjoy the incomparable favor of following Him everywhere in Heaven. A wealthy nobleman has, also, demanded my hand; I have refused him. My choice is made: nothing in the world could make me change it."

"I admire your courage and fervor," replied Victoria, "but I do not feel called to practise such sub-

line virtue. I desire to serve God and save my soul; marriage will not, I think, be any obstacle thereto. Eugenius, it is true, is a pagan, but I shall soon lead him to the true religion; he loves me so much that he will refuse me nothing."

"Dear Victoria," said Anatolia, "the inconstancy of man is very great. What certainty have you that the sentiments of your betrothed will not change? How many young persons are thus deceived! The spouse whom I have chosen is immutable and ever faithful to His promises; He is truth and goodness itself. You flatter yourself that you will be able to lead Lord Eugenius to the knowledge of the true faith; is it not more probable that he will solicit you to renounce a religion which he abhors and blasphemes,—a religion that could not be pleasing to a young man accustomed to follow those passions which it restrains?"

"But allow me, my friend," added she, "to reveal to you the depths of my soul, and make you a sharer in my happiness. From the day on which I consecrated myself to the Spouse of Virgins, I have enjoyed ineffable peace and happiness; I feel disposed to sacrifice everything for His love. The world is nothing more to me; whatever I behold of festivities and pleasures, seems to me dull, wearisome, insupportable; and, before all its pleasures, I would prefer one moment spent in my oratory. I have distributed the price of my jewels among the poor, and have renounced all worldly ornaments. God has favored me with a heavenly vision. I have

seen in heaven a crown of incomparable glory, and a voice has said to me: 'This is reserved for virgins.' Ah! if one knew the value of virginity, one would leave everything, one would sacrifice everything for this precious pearl!"

Victoria had listened to her friend without interrupting her. Moved, transported at these last words, she embraced Anatolia, and said:

"And I, also, wish to be a virgin, and have no other spouse than Jesus Christ." . . . . Both fell on their knees; their pure and fervent prayers ascended to heaven. God heard their vows, their promises of fidelity; He blessed them, and filled their souls with strength to sustain the combats which hell was preparing against them.

The two noble suitors were not long in learning the maidens' generous resolution. Desperate and furious, they obtained orders from the magistrates to drag the two young virgins from their parents, and conduct them to distant castles, belonging to them. There, each employed every means of seduction; prayers, caresses, menaces, promises, flattery, ill-treatment, nothing was spared.

Finding their efforts useless, they denounced them as Christians, and demanded that they should be put to death by the most frightful torments. This barbarous satisfaction was granted them, and our two saints went to receive in heaven the martyrs' palm, and the virgins' crown.\*

\* The Church celebrates the feast of St. Victoria on the 23d of December, and that of St. Anatolia on the 9th of July.

I would wish, my children, that you might each find a friend like St. Anatolia, not precisely that she might deter you from marriage, for it is a holy state, and that to which the greater number of you are called; but that her example and virtuous conversation might preserve you in the practice of virtue.

If, among your acquaintances you find none possessing the qualities requisite for a pure and holy friendship, it would be infinitely better, my children, to deny yourselves this consolation, rather than expose yourselves to the danger of losing, in the society of worldly persons, the virtue and piety you acquired during your education. Concentrate, then, in your own family, all the affections of your heart, and avoid all particular communication with those outside that beloved circle.

Reflect seriously on this advice, for it is extremely important. It might happen that a friendship begun at first with good and laudable intentions, would afterwards become a snare for you. You may recognize this by certain marks. I will quote the words of St. Francis de Sales on this subject:\*

"Worldly friendship," says he, "ordinarily produces a great profusion of endearing words, passionate expressions, admiration of beauty, grace, and other natural qualities; holy friendship, on the contrary, speaks a plain and sincere language, and commends nothing but virtue and the grace of God. False friendship produces a vertigo of the mind, which makes a person stagger in the path of virtue; leading them on to affected and immodest looks,

\* Introduction to the Devout Life.

sensual caresses, inordinate sighs and ridiculous complaints of not being beloved, studied and enticing carriage, gallantries, interchanging of kisses, with other familiarities and indecent favors, the certain and unquestionable presages of the approaching ruin of chastity. But the looks of holy friendship are simple and modest; its caresses pure and sincere; its sighs are but for heaven; its familiarities are only spiritual; its complaints only when God is not beloved. Worldly friendship bewilders the judgment to such a degree that they who are infected with it, think they do well when they act wrongly, and believe their excuses and pretexts for two reasons; they fear the light, and love darkness. But holy friendship is clear-sighted, and never conceals herself, but appears willingly before those that are good. False friendships change into carnal and immodest words and demands; and, in case of refusal, into injuries, slanders, impostures, sadness, confusion and jealousies; but chaste friendship is always equally honest, civil and amiable, and changes only into a purer union of spirits; a lively image of the blessed friendship existing in heaven."

I am persuaded, my children, that you are, at present, firmly resolved to fly those dangerous intimacies, and to give your heart wholly to God. But we are so weak, our minds are so shrouded in darkness, and the devil lays so many subtle snares for us, that it is very difficult not to fall sometimes.

This consideration induces me to present to you here, some means of freeing yourselves from Satan's

wiles, should he ever, unhappily, succeed in drawing you into a dangerous friendship, and it is again from St. Francis de Sales that I draw them.

By reading attentively the words of this saint quoted above, you can easily discern of what kind are your friendships. If in them you find some of the traits of worldly or evil friendship, fear, my children, fear greatly, and arm yourselves with courage to break with the person, who might be for you the occasion of so great an evil. Follow, then, in every point, the counsels of the saint I delight to quote.

“But what remedies,” says he, “must be taken against this multitude of filthy affections? As soon as you perceive the first approach of them, turn suddenly away, and with an absolute horror and detestation, run to the cross of our Saviour, take His crown of thorns and press it to your heart, that the evil spirit may not be able to come near it. Beware of coming to any kind of compromise with this enemy; do not say: I will lend him my ears, but refuse him my heart. Be resolute on these occasions, for the heart and the ears correspond with each other, and it is hard to prevent words that have entered the ear from penetrating to the heart. Harken, then, to no proposition under any pretext whatsoever; in this case there is no danger of being rude and uncivil.

“But if you are already entangled in the nets of filthy loves, O God! how difficult will it be to extricate yourself from them! Place yourself before the

Divine Majesty, acknowledge, in his presence, the excess of your misery, frailty, and vanity; then with the greatest effort of which your heart is capable, detest that passion, abjure it, and with the most generous and absolute resolution, determine in your heart never more to consent to such fatal pleasures and entertainments.

“If you could withdraw yourself from the person who is the occasion of the evil, it would be infinitely preferable; but what must he do who cannot withdraw himself? He must absolutely retrench all particular familiarity, all private conversation, all looks and smiles, and, in general, all sorts of communication and allurements which may nourish this dangerous passion. If one must speak to the other party, let it only be to declare boldly the eternal separation one has sworn. I call upon every one who has fallen into this snare: Cut, break, tear,—you must not amuse yourself in unravelling those criminal friendships, you must rend them asunder; do not enter into any compromise with a love so contrary to the love of God.

“‘Ah!’ you say, ‘will it not be ingratitude to break off a friendship so abruptly?’ Oh! how happy is that ingratitude which makes us pleasing to God! But no, I tell you in the name of God, this will be no ingratitude, but rather a great benefit you will confer on this person; because in breaking your own bonds you also break hers, and though for the present she may not be sensible of her happiness, she will recognize it later on.

“But if, after you have burst the chains of that infamous slavery, there still remains, through the imperfection of your repentance, some evil inclinations, reject them with all your strength. Read pious and holy books, with more than ordinary application; go to confession and communion more frequently; treat humbly and sincerely with your director, or some prudent and faithful friend, concerning all the suggestions and temptations of this kind, and doubt not but that God will deliver you from those evil passions, provided you continue faithfully in these good exercises.”

Still more to strengthen you, my children, in the resolution of avoiding those dangerous intimacies, it would be easy for me to give some examples of the unhappy effects they often produce; but I refrain from doing so, through the fear of offending, by such recitals, the innocence of your heart. Only remember, that it takes very little to constitute a mortal sin against chastity: a look, a word, a familiarity, even a thought is sufficient. The world will pass it over; it does not examine these things too closely, it blames only the last excesses; but God, who is sanctity itself, reproves, abhors, and punishes them eternally.

Ah! how should you then fear those dangerous friendships which lead to so deplorable an evil! With what extreme care should you avoid all free conversations, profane songs, visits, letters and familiarities, which, according to St. Jerome, are the marks of *expiring chastity*! How should you

fly the artifices of vanity, immodest dress, flatteries and homages which so agreeably tickle your heart, and dispose it to those pernicious intimacies which drag one into the abyss!

Alas, my children, the height of the misfortune is, that, ordinarily, one finds extreme difficulty in acknowledging those weaknesses in the holy tribunal of Penance. A false shame then seizes on those young girls who have fallen, and frequently they die without having repaired, by an humble and sincere avowal, the fatal fall which gave death to their virtue! . . . . .

Listen to a frightful example related by St. Ligouri:—

A king of England had a daughter of rare beauty. Many princes sought her hand, but she refused all, saying that she had made a vow of chastity. The king, her father, permitted her to retire into a solitary castle, where she led a life extremely severe, macerating her body, frequenting the sacraments, visiting the poor, and praying with extraordinary fervor. In the midst of those austerities she died, being yet young. A lady who had been her governess, while praying for her during the night, heard a frightful noise; at the same time she beheld a woman in the midst of horrible flames, surrounded by many devils. "I am the unfortunate princess for whom you are praying," cried the spectre.

"What!" exclaimed the governess, "you who lived so holily, are you damned?"

"Yes," continued the unfortunate girl, "and I am

damned through my own fault. While still quite young, I took extreme pleasure in listening to a young page, who was accustomed to read for me. Before retiring, he affectionately kissed my hand. I loved him; the demon tempted me, and I fell. I went to confession and began to accuse myself of my sin. The confessor having shown some surprise when I told him this, shame overcame me, and I said that it had happened during sleep. I performed great penance, that God might pardon my crime, but I had not confessed it as I should have done. On my death-bed, I told my confessor that I was a great sinner, but acknowledged no more. He exhorted me to have confidence; I died, and am eternally damned."

So saying, the spectre vanished, and so great was the noise, that one would have thought the world was coming to an end. An insupportable stench filled, for several days, the apartment in which this fearful scene had been enacted.

I shall close this chapter, my children, with a terrible truth on which you should meditate; it is this: The net spread by the demon to surprise souls and make them fall into the vice of impurity, is immense. No one can avoid it save by penance and prayer. The holy doctors assure us, that, among young persons of both sexes, who have the misfortune to be damned, nearly all fall into hell through the consequences of this passion, which, ordinarily, is begun by foolish friendship.



## CHAPTER V

### *DUTIES TO PASTORS OF THE CHURCH AND CONFESSORS.*

To honor and respect them—Never to speak of their defects, or amuse one's self at their expense—Examples—Zeal and devotedness of priests—Conduct in regard of confessors and ministers of religion.

**I**T is your duty, my children, as it is that of every Christian, to honor and respect the pastors of the Church. They hold the place of Jesus Christ on earth; they are the dispensers of His graces; they pray for us:—how many powerful motives excite us to honor them, to give them marks of our profound veneration!

Formerly, the priest was the consoler of every trial, the confidant of every secret, the counsellor to whom every one had recourse. He presided over all family feasts, for those feasts were pure and christian-like; his visits were regarded as an honor and a blessing. In our day, faith is so feeble, that, in some families, we scarcely find a trace of the respect due to the ministers of God. One might even say that there is a general conspiracy to decry them, to calumniate them, to deprive them of all consideration.

Be on your guard, my children, against this evil; give no credit to evil reports regarding the conduct of priests, and if, through an exception, always unhappy, although very rare, some do give cause for them, close your eyes, your ears, and your lips. Pray for them, pray for their slanderers and detractors, and let not your faith be weakened.

One often meets in the world men who blaspheme our holy religion, because some of her ministers dishonor her; they are very wrong. Our holy religion is not the work of our priests; it is the work of God Himself. He upholds it, despite all scandals, from whomsoever they come.

After all, it is only the impious who defame the Catholic clergy, on account of the prevarications of some of its members; every sensible man perceives the injustice of such a proceeding; pious persons deplore it, and redouble their respect and veneration for the sacred character of the priest.

At the time of the Council of Nice, in 325, many complaints against the clergy were sent to the Emperor Constantine. The monarch, instead of reading them, tied them together and threw them into the fire, saying to those who had presented them: "The sins of the priests should not be revealed, on account of the particular scandal which might thence result to the people." On another occasion the same prince said: "Were I to see a priest offending God, I would cover him with my cloak, that I might hide him from every gaze."

St. Simeon Stylites, who, on account of the aus-

terity of his penance and the holiness of his life, was consulted by persons from all parts of the world, would never listen to complaints against the clergy or persons consecrated to God. If any one told him that the ministers of religion preached holy truths in an unseemly manner, he would say: "Beg God to enlighten them, and instruct yourselves by reading holy books." If the complaints were directed against their conduct, he would strongly reprove the detractor, and add: "Pray for the clergy, and leave to the Head of the Church the care of reprimanding them."

A pious lady of our acquaintance, never allowed anything prejudicial to the reputation of priests to be said in her presence; she would not even allow their habits or natural defects to be spoken of, so much had she at heart the preservation of the respect and consideration due to them.

She had three daughters, who had been educated in a convent; she also received at her house, during their vacations, five orphan nieces, who were finishing their education. Those young persons spent very pleasantly the time given them to rest after the labor of the scholastic year, and their aunt willingly took part in their conversations and games. But no sooner would one of them allow an uncharitable remark, particularly of a priest, to escape her lips, than she would say in a serious tone: "Take care what you say, children; to speak ill of a priest, to laugh at him, or make a jest at his expense, is to offend God."

"Mamma," answered one of her daughters, who was very lively, and who was, on one occasion, mimicking the somewhat rustic manners of an ecclesiastic, "mamma, I am not amusing myself at the expense of a priest; I only mean Mr. Such-a-one." "Mr. Such-a-one is a priest," replied the mother, "and he is not two persons. Children," added she, addressing the young ladies, "if you laugh at a priest's expense, you will be tempted to laugh when you assist at his mass, or see him performing any other priestly function; thus you will lose your recollection and the piety and respect you should show the ceremonies of religion. I compare those who amuse themselves at a priest's expense to Cham, the son of Noah, who laughed at his sleeping father, and wished his brothers to join him. You know if God approved his conduct. Priests are our spiritual fathers; we should respect them, and hide their defects, as far as lies in our power."

Some persons may, perhaps, think this estimable lady's ideas somewhat exaggerated; for my part, I strongly approve her view of the question, and exhort you, dear children, never to introduce into your games or amusing conversations, anything relating to priests or persons consecrated to God, lest you might lessen in yourselves or others that respect due to them.

St. Francis of Assisium, who, through humility, refused the honor of the priesthood, used to say: "If I were to meet a priest and an angel together, I would first salute the priest and then the angel."

Constantine the Great, at the Council of Nice, would occupy only the last place after all the priests, and refused to be seated until he had obtained their permission.

Many princes, in former times, were accustomed to descend from their throne at the approach of any priest, to go to meet him, and bowing profoundly, to kiss his hand and ask his blessing.

The Emperors Honorius and Valentinian say in their rescripts: "We pronounce the name of the priests with respect, and the whole world is humbled before them."

What is surprising now-a-days, my children, is that men, good-for-nothing, ignorant, rude laborers, uneducated women, giddy girls, badly-brought-up children, are allowed to speak as they wish of the priests, and nobody thinks of reproving them for it.

There were in the time of St. John Chrysostom, also, although far less numerous than in our days, Christians, who, far from respecting the clergy and following their advice, loaded them with injuries and contempt. The holy doctor severely reproached them. "Ingrates," exclaimed he, "is this the acknowledgment you owe the ministers of the Lord for the service they render you? Was it not by the hand of the priest that you were regenerated in Baptism? Is it not through his ministry that you obtain the pardon of your sins, and participate in the body and blood of Jesus Christ? Is it not the priest who breaks to your children the bread of the word, who

instructs you yourselves, who prays for you, who opens heaven to you?"

O, my children, how venerable is a holy priest! What good does he not do? of how many virtuous and noble actions is he not the instigator, the promoter? Appreciate his devotedness, and be grateful for it.

A few years ago, a village in one of the Eastern Departments of France, became the scene of a frightful event, which I shall relate, that you may be able to judge of the self-abnegation required by the minister of God, to fulfil his painful functions.

During thirty years, a venerable priest had been pastor of the village, where he was generally beloved as a father. He had baptized, prepared for their First Communion, and married nearly all his parishioners, and he lived cordially and familiarly with them. The presbytery was always open. The poor, in particular, knew his door well, for to them he always gave. Only two families were somewhat hostile to the pastor; nevertheless, they dared not show their hostility openly.

A pious young girl, of good family, having refused the hand of a young man belonging to one of the families above-mentioned, they imagined that the priest had advised her refusal, and the disappointed suitor secretly concerted vengeance with some of his relations.

On a very dark night, the worthy pastor was called to attend a sick man, who, as they said, was in the last extremity.

It was, alas! only a snare, but the minister of the God of charity could not suspect this. He hastily arose and set out for the designated place, accompanied by the sacristan. They had gone but a few steps when two persons fell on the priest, and struck him severely with a stick. He sank to the ground; the terrified sacristan fled; the assassins dispatched their victim and disappeared.

At the dawn of day, some peasants when going to work, found the bleeding corpse of their pastor lying by the roadside. The head, separated from the body, had been thrown into a neighboring field.

See, my children, to what dangers priests are exposed! Ah! what devotedness does it require to accept functions, the exercise of which requires such abnegation! How many priests have died victims to their zeal for the accomplishment of their holy duties! They might have been counted by thousands during the French Revolution, and the clergy of our time would not be found less courageous or less faithful, were they subjected to the like trials.

We read the following in a public journal some time ago: "It is in the midst of poverty that the heavenly mission of the apostle of his brethren shines most brilliantly. Consolation flows from his lips; he is indefatigable in his quest of the bashful poor. Where there is sickness, where death visits, there does he also immediately hasten; wherever tears flow, or anguish writhes, he goes to claim his share of sadness. Torturing his own heart, overwhelming his own soul with the woes of his breth-

men, after the example of his Divine Master, he carries his cross up the sorrowful way, and finds none to weep over him at the sight of his grief.

"See him, also, despite bad weather, or the severity of the season, bearing the Holy Viaticum in the night to the sick, strengthening them during the agonies of death. Behold that tender pastor, gathering around him the children of the village, teaching the younger ones to stammer the name of the good God, leading the older ones to know, to love, and to serve Him, disposing them to participate in that Divine Banquet, the very remembrance of which, they may, perhaps, afterwards lose! See him again, in instructions characterized by charming simplicity, reminding heads of families of duties too much neglected; interfering in their quarrels only to appease them; blessing those whom he has reconciled, adding each day to the natural influence of his ministry, that produced by his devotedness amidst the disasters and scourges which afflict and decimate his people."

Such, my children, are some of the virtues which adorn the Catholic priest. Never forget this, and when dark calumny and lying envy would defame them, and represent them other than they are, say fearlessly: "It is untrue; you cannot impose on us; we know the priest by his works."

It sometimes happens, in certain localities in which there is otherwise much faith and religion, that people do not like the manners and actions of their pastor. You should, my children, as far as in

your power, combat those unfavorable opinions which paralyze the priest's power for good. Justify his intentions, give a favorable interpretation to his words, and commend his zeal on certain occasions when prudence will tell you you will be favorably heard. Do you yourselves second his views, by aiding him in whatever may be productive of good among young persons of your own acquaintance.

In general, my children, never refuse your concurrence to your pastors in charitable associations, congregations, the adorning of altars, solemnization of feasts, etc. But, such things excepted, have as little intercourse as possible with them; scrupulously preserve that modesty and reserve suitable to your age and sex; dread to draw on yourselves and the ministers of the Lord, the attention of the curious, the sarcasms of the impious, the blame of good persons: any imprudence on your part might be productive of frightful consequences as regards the reputation of a priest.

What I say in regard of your pastors, must, with much greater reason, be understood of your intercourse with the priest who directs your conscience. Let this intercourse be well regulated, brief and useful, and let it be confined to the confessional.

People generally disapprove of young persons who go alone to the house of their confessor, or who, even when accompanied, go there without real necessity. They, with as much reason, blame those who go too frequently to the confessional, and who stay there so long, as to render themselves remarked

One should speak in confession only of affairs of conscience. If you seek for God alone, you will behold Him in the person of your confessor, you will frankly open your soul to your spiritual guide, and will readily do whatever he requires of you; then all will be soon said on both sides.





## CHAPTER VI.

### *VISITS.*

Visits of Propriety—Friendly Visits—Rules to be observed when one goes abroad—Danger incurred by a young girl's having disregarded those rules.

**V**IRTUE, my children, should not render you unsociable; she does not require you to remain as secluded as a religious in her convent, and you would be blamable were you to neglect those visits which propriety demands.

For example, you cannot dispense yourselves from making them about Christmas or New Year to your superiors, your relations; to persons who have conferred favors on you; to your relations and friends after a recent affliction, a happy event, etc. On such occasions, be amiable, but reserved; speak to the purpose, but without emphasis; and, above all, know how to listen to others.

Such visits of propriety, are, generally, short, and not attended with much danger; but those made to one's friends, allowing much more liberty, and being of greater length, sometimes give room to conversations in which charity is injured. Make it a rule, on those occasions and all others, never to speak of your neighbor, unless you have something good to

say of him. Do not imitate many giddy young persons, who remark a thousand insignificant things in the habits, carriage, and language of persons whom they meet, that they may afterwards jest about them, and laugh at them with their companions. They spare neither ecclesiastics nor persons most deserving of respect; one would say they found their greatest happiness in amusing themselves at their neighbors' expense. This practice is extremely improper, and becomes no one; if, at times, those who indulge in it display a kind of wit, they, more generally, give evidence of great foolishness and little judgment.

You are too well instructed in the rules of propriety, my children, to permit yourselves much useless going abroad. You know, also, that it is very unbecoming in a young girl to walk in the street without being in full dress; only servants and laborers are dispensed from this rule.

In cities, a young girl of any respectability, who should be careless in these points, would be remarked, as one ignorant of all propriety. In the country, one is not so particular; nevertheless, you should not allow yourself too much freedom. When you walk abroad in company with others, and more especially, when obliged to go out alone, be careful to follow the rules here laid down:

1st. Let your gait be neither too quick nor too slow; there is a difference between a run and a promenade.

2d. Do not stop to look at pictures, curiosities, or

shop-windows; do not stare at any one; carefully avoid whatever might render you conspicuous.

3d. Do not turn around at the slightest noise; do not laugh aloud; speak as little as possible, and in a low tone; do not whisper mysteriously when you meet certain persons, ecclesiastics or others; this would be very impolite.

4th. If you be alone, and notice that any importunate person is following you, pretend not to perceive it, but turn quickly into another street, enter a store on some pretext, or hasten your steps, if you cannot otherwise free yourself from the vexation.

A young girl otherwise virtuous and pious, incurred, some time ago, a frightful danger, by not acting in accordance with these rules. She was walking in one of our large cities, accompanied by her parents, and while amusing herself by looking from one side to the other, at whatever seemed strange and curious, she did not notice that her parents were far ahead of her, and when she wished to rejoin them, it was impossible for her to know what direction they had taken. The poor child was a stranger to the city, and in her terror and anxiety she turned from one side to the other, questioned the passers-by, and described, as well as she could, the persons she wished to find. A gentleman, elegantly dressed, seeing her embarrassment, approached her and said very politely: "Miss, I saw your parents pass by a few moments ago; they were walking very quickly, and are now some distance away. If you come to my house, I

will have you taken to them by some confidential person." In her trouble, the young girl paused not to reflect; she followed him. But, alas! she perceived too soon that she had fallen into the hands of a wicked wretch. Happily, at this critical moment, she remembered to call on Mary, and thanks, doubtless, to the intervention of this good Mother, her parents, who had been seeking for her with the greatest anxiety, found traces of her, and reached the spot in time to save her from the greatest of misfortunes.

This example proves, my children, the power of the Blessed Virgin, and how efficaciously she aids those who invoke her; but it also shows that you should, while in the streets, attend to the rules of prudence and propriety, and that a forgetfulness of them, under similar circumstances, might entail the most frightful consequences.

Pay attention also to your manner of walking, so that you may not soil your clothes with the filth of the streets, or occasion inconvenience to those who accompany you. Walk on the middle of the pavement, and step on tip-toe over the street crossings. If necessary, raise your dress, but not too high, and only on one side.

I need not say how unbecoming it would be for you to enter an office or store, merely to gratify your curiosity. You would, with good reason, be looked upon as an idler, and might, perhaps, give occasion to some to speak disrespectfully of you.



## PART FOURTH.

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### COUNSELS ON DIFFERENT SUBJECTS.

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#### CHAPTER I

#### *CONVERSATION.*

To say nothing that might wound charity—Danger of light and worldly conversations—Saint Theresa—Subjects for innocent and agreeable conversation.

**C**ONVERSATION, my children, is good and laudable in itself; it is the link of communication between men, established by God Himself. Did we but direct it aright, it would be wholly favorable to the accomplishment of our duties; we would communicate our good thoughts to one another, would console one another in our trials, would mutually excite one another to virtue. But, on the contrary, we often strangely pervert this gift of our Creator.

In reality, what is the ordinary topic of conversation in the world? Doubtless, you have already remarked it with dread. People take delight in speaking of their neighbors' faults, in repeating a thousand calumnies, which sometimes attack even

those most worthy of respect. This, it is true, is often done through thoughtlessness, without any evil intention, but, nevertheless, it violates one of the most rigorous precepts of the Lord.

Being, as yet, unaccustomed to such discourses, it most certainly pains you to listen to them; but, if you be not on your guard, the example of others will draw you on, and soon you will take part in conversations, by which God and the neighbor will be seriously offended. Thus to fail in charity, my children, is to be no longer Christian; were you irreproachable in all other respects, you would, by this fault alone, destroy the merit of your other good works. What pitiful inconsistency! how is it that one does not notice it? One goes regularly to church; prays for a long time, and with faith; listens to the divine word; gives alms; and yet, without remorse, without the slightest pain, one daily transgresses the most sacred of God's commandments, by detractions and other grave faults of the same kind.

Watch yourselves, children, that you may never fall on this point. In general, refrain from speaking of the absent. If any one speaks ill of them in your presence, take no part in the conversation, and should offence be taken at your silence, say politely but fearlessly, that you do not occupy yourself about your neighbor's conduct or affairs.

There is another kind of conversation in which young ladies often indulge, which, without being criminal, is certainly very hurtful to them. I mean

those light and worldly conversations on frivolous things. Such discourses habituate the young to attach importance to trifles, and generally lead to forgetfulness of indispensable duties. Young girls, addicted to this fault, sometimes spend whole hours in talking about the latest fashions, the beauty and grace of this or that style, the greater or less taste displayed in the dress of their friends. They never grow weary of communicating to one another certain remarks they have heard, chimerical projects, certain anecdotes, certain meetings of the utmost importance in their eyes, yet, which, at bottom, are but pure *nonsense*, to which a girl of common sense would pay no attention. "Thus," says Mlle. Martin, speaking on this subject, "they fill the imagination with vanity, the heart with what is least worthy of occupying it; and there is no room either for the things of God or the requirements of duty; they acquire such a taste for foolish talk, that they no longer understand serious and sensible discourse."\*

Such, in fact, is the deplorable result of habitual conversation on trifles. Those who take delight in them, do not regard them as useless and empty; they give them a false value, and, unfortunately, count them the great happiness of their lives. What fatal consequences may be their result!

Urge those young ladies to reflect, to make a short meditation; they will answer that they cannot do it: that it is impossible for them to fix their minds

\* L'Amie des jeunes personnes.

on serious things. I can easily believe it. Urge them to read attentively, some pages of a pious book; they may make the attempt, but while their eyes run over the lines, their minds will dwell on trinkets, laces, flowers; and in vain would you ask them for some account of what they have read.

You can easily conceive, my children, that, with such dispositions, a young person cannot become solidly pious; see then, how fatal are those frivolous discourses.

Let us now speak of your private talks when only two or three of you are together. Nothing restrains you on those occasions; you truly speak from *the abundance of the heart*. Well! what is in your heart? . . . . Doubtless, great love of God, filial confidence in Mary, great desire to do good, a sweet sensibility of the miseries of the poor? Let us see, my children; I listen, and what do I hear? What is it that now superabounds in those youthful hearts, formerly so pure, so simple, so strongly inclined to good, so fearful of the very shadow of evil? Alas! only foolish or dangerous ideas, romantic projects, accounts, only too true, of guilty homage either received or provoked! . . . . Perhaps, even, communications yet more guilty, which I dare not name! . . .

Here lies, my children, and know it well, here lies a danger, most fatal to young girls. Ah! if you would but have the candor to relate to your mothers all that is said between you! . . . . But you generally envelop in mystery those intimate communications, and they seem to you so much the more precious,

because inviolable secrecy accompanies them. It will be the most, if, at the sacred tribunal, you say a word about them to your confessor.

Ah! dear children, when your conversations become secret, when you would blush were one to guess their subject, know that they are condemnable, and that God is offended by them. Break, break without ceremony, with those perfidious friends, who have been the devil's instruments to poison your heart. Go and candidly reveal the evil to the physician of your soul; follow his advice; pray, humble yourself before God; if you do not, your innocence is gone; the most beautiful of virtues is withered and dead in your soul.

The illustrious Saint Theresa relates of herself, that her salvation was in great danger, through the worldly and unguarded conversations she had held with a relation. "This intercourse with her," says the saint, "began when I was about fourteen years, and I think a little over. . . . I do not think I had offended God by any mortal sin, nor had ever lost His fear, though I dreaded more the loss of my honor. I was extremely anxious for the preservation of this false honor, and nevertheless, I did not perceive that I had lost it in many ways.

"My father and sister were much troubled about this friendship I had formed, and they reproved me for it very often; but as they were unable to remove the occasion of her coming to the house, all their care was of no avail, and my sagacity, which was great, particularly for evil, furnished me with means

to deceive them. . . . . The conversations of this relation produced such a change in me, that there was scarcely any sign left in me of my former good dispositions; they had given place to the bad qualities of this relative and one of her friends. . . . . Having thus lost the fear of the Lord, the fear of losing my honor alone remained, and this tormented me. . . I ran great risk of losing my innocence. Happily God delivered me from the danger by an effect of His goodness, although matters could not be managed so secretly but that my honor was stained thereby, and suspicions were raised in my father's mind. He loved me so tenderly, and so great was my dissimulation, that he was far from believing me as bad as I really was. Hence I did not fall into disgrace with him, notwithstanding the evil reports which were spread regarding those conversations I had held."

St. Theresa's father, knowing well the evil that might result from too much intercourse with a worldly relation, profited by the occasion of his eldest daughter's marriage to place the younger in a convent, under pretence that she could not remain alone. She was placed as a pensioner with the Augustinian nuns at Avila. She was very unhappy during her first eight days in the monastery, less on account of having been placed there, than from the fear that her conduct had been discovered. Little by little, this feeling wore away, and she became very happy in the society of her pious mistresses; their conversations revealed their good sentiments,

and she learned how useful it is to live with virtuous persons.

What would have become of St. Theresa, my children, had she continued her intercourse with her worldly friends? There is reason to believe, that, instead of becoming a holy religious, the glory of her family, of her congregation and of her country, she should be numbered among those romantic heroines whose names, known for a time, because of the shame attached to them, are afterwards lost in oblivion. See, then, what may be the result of those conversations, which you, perhaps, permit yourselves to indulge in.

I know that our mind is too weak to be incessantly occupied on elevated things. It must, certainly, have some relaxation, and conversation produces this effect. Nothing, then, is more just, nothing more proper than innocent chats with virtuous friends. How many interesting subjects may be introduced, which can cause neither trouble nor regret! The details of a family feast, for instance, the recollections of childhood, some passages from interesting and instructive reading, pleasant jests, incidents of travel, visits to the poor, news from the convent-school in which one has been educated, and similar topics.

And then, dear children, sometimes simple and pious words, which remind one of God, His goodness, His merciful Providence; some talk, also, about the Blessed Virgin, your good Mother;—how many subjects there are, indifferent, useful,

pleasing or courteous, which you can discuss with your friends!

They will never be wanting to you if you wish for them; and, believe me, they will procure you pleasure none the less lively, none the less attractive, than that you might derive from worldly conversation; and what is more, those innocent entertainments will have the immense advantage of never disturbing the peace of your heart, or opposing obstacles to your advancement in virtue.





## CHAPTER II.

### *PROPRIETIES TO BE OBSERVED IN CONVERSATION.*

The tone of voice—La Rochefoucauld's rules for conversation—  
Speak little and to the purpose—A great talker—The Duchess of  
Burgundy.

LET us first, my children, say a word, about the voice. If your voice be harsh, nasal, shrill, or too loud, try to remedy these defects, which are very disagreeable. Watch yourselves, until you have succeeded in acquiring an agreeable tone, at least such a tone as may not be unpleasant; do this,—not through a motive of vanity, always more or less blamable,—but that you may not be tiresome to those who visit you, or live with you, and that you may not expose yourselves to be judged unfavorably. It might, in fact, happen, that, from your tone of voice, certain persons, accustomed to judge only from the exterior, would suppose you to be harsh, severe, difficult to please, or, at least, disagreeable or cross. I have known a lady, extremely good and kind, who, on first acquaintance, would be thought severe and passionate, because of her harsh voice.

Take care, however, not to adopt a drawling or affected tone; you would end by becoming as ridiculous

ulous as those silly girls who imitate the mincing tone of would-be fine ladies.

Try, dear children, to preserve a correct pronunciation, and carefully avoid using coarse or vulgar words and phrases, such as are employed by the ignorant, or persons of the lower classes. Notice the turn of thought, the style of expression in those who speak well; everything is simple and natural, yet perfectly conformable to the rules of language and propriety.

Let us now see how one should act during conversation. I cannot do better than quote here, the rules laid down by the Duke de la Rochefoucauld:

"The reason why so few persons are agreeable in conversation, is, because each one thinks rather of what he wishes to say, than of what others are saying, and one listens very little when one is anxious to speak.

"It is, however, necessary to listen to those who speak. We must give them time to be heard, and even allow them to say useless things. Far from contradicting or interrupting them, we should, on the contrary, enter into their ideas and inclinations, show them that we are listening, praise when what they say seems praiseworthy, and show that this is done from choice, rather than complaisance.

"To please others, we must speak of what they love, of what is interesting to them; we must avoid disputing on indifferent matters, ask few questions, and never give them reason to believe that we think we know better than they.

"We should particularly avoid speaking much about ourselves, and holding ourselves up for an example. Nothing is more disagreeable than one who is continually bringing himself forward.

"We must never speak with an air of authority, or show any superiority of mind. We should avoid all far-fetched expressions, all harsh or forced terms, and never employ words unsuited to the subject of conversation.

"One is sure to displease when one talks too long and too frequently of the same subject, and when one tries to turn the conversation on topics on which he thinks himself better instructed than others. We should enter indifferently into whatever is agreeable to the company, dwell on the subject as long as they wish, and avoid everything that might be disagreeable to them.

"We should observe the place, the time, the occasion, and also, the humor of those who are listening to us; for if it is a great art to know when to speak, it is none the less, to know when to be silent. There is an eloquent silence which can either approve or condemn; there is a silence of respect and discretion. There are also turns, airs, and manners, which make everything agreeable in conversation.

"But the secret of this art is given to but few persons. Those, even, who lay down rules, are often deceived therein, and the surest that can be given, is to listen much, speak little, and say nothing for which one may afterwards have to repent."

These rules, my children, are excellent; but I

acknowledge, with the author, that it is difficult to observe them, particularly at your age; make the trial nevertheless. As you go more into society, you will acquire greater experience, and will set much value on the art of speaking little and to the purpose. You know that our sex has the reputation of being great talkers, and of exercising very little circumspection over what we say; act so well, that you may be an exception to the general rule. Inasmuch as a young lady who is a continual talker, is thought little of, so much is she, who speaks little, but to the purpose, esteemed and regarded in society.

People often amuse themselves maliciously at the expense of great talkers.

"On this subject," says Blanchard,\* "we are told of a good trick played on a lady of much intelligence, who was a great talker, and very vain.

"Some persons took it into their heads to present to her a gentleman, who, as they said, was very learned. She received him most graciously, but, anxious to win his admiration, she began to talk, and asked him a thousand different questions, without perceiving that he made no reply. The visit ended:—'What do you think of the gentleman?' she was asked. 'How delightful he is! how learned he is!' she replied. Now the man was *dumb!*'"

Mme. de Maintenon, in her letters to the ladies of Saint Cyr, relates, that when the young Duchess of Burgundy was brought into France, her wit and

\* *Ecole des mœurs*, tome ii.

sprightly talk were much praised. Every day they related to the king some happy sally, some ingenious repartee of the princess, and the whole court was in astonishment. The king was not of the same mind. Some days before the princess was to arrive, he said anxiously to Mme. de Maintenon: "What can we think of this girl? I do not like her prattling."

Mme. de Maintenon adds, that the king was extremely pleased when he saw the princess, to find her steady, sensible, and having but little to say. Those who had represented her otherwise, had intended to please the king, and were deceived.





### CHAPTER III.

#### READING.

Advantages of good reading—Danger of frivolous and bad books—

Example of a young girl addicted to reading bad books—Confession of one, passionately fond of light reading—Reading suitable for young ladies.

READING, my daughters, is the surest means of developing the qualities of the heart, of entertaining pious and holy thoughts, and producing good desires therein; but you will readily believe that this is not the effect of frivolous reading, still less of that which is impious and immoral:—these produce quite an opposite effect.

I do not intend, my children, to warn you against this kind of reading; you know too well its dangers, you have too great a horror of it. I will only say—in order to confirm you in the resolution you have taken, of never giving yourselves up to it,—that, should you ever be so unfortunate as to feed your soul with such corrupt nourishment, your faith would undoubtedly be shaken, and you would find yourselves hurrying in the way that leads to shame, despair, and ruin.

Listen to what befell a poor young girl, named Emma Poncet, whose history we find in the *Soirées villageoises*.

After her First Communion, she, little by little abandoned every practice of piety, and gave herself up to the reading of romances. Her parents were not wealthy, but they loved her extravagantly, and gratified her every caprice. They did not prevent her indulging her taste for pernicious reading, and soon her head and heart were so full of what she read, that she thought only of intrigues, gallantry and wicked love.

A young man met the foolish girl at a public ball; he addressed her in flattering words, he pressed her hand, and finding that familiarity not repulsed, he understood that he had not to deal with very strict virtue. After two or three such meetings, their acquaintance became more intimate, and the young man declared that he aspired to the honor of marrying *the beautiful Emma*. He was the son of a wealthy lawyer! What a prospect for a porter's daughter, for Emma was nothing more. The whole family became wild with delight! The young girl, thinking herself already a fine lady, would no longer work. She spent the whole day in reading her beloved novels, which showed her a thousand examples of rich gentlemen who had married pretty young girls, whose fortunes and happiness they thus made. Nothing was spoken of in the house but the happiness and good fortune of the marriage, always promised but always deferred by the young man, under various pretexts. In fine, the affair was put off longer than it should have been. The parents were so foolish and their daughter so guilty, that, instead

of the expected marriage and the promised château, she was obliged to hide her shame in a hospital.

Thus deceived, her parents burst into reproaches, but Emma, relying on what she had read in novels, continued to hope, and tried to make her parents sharers in her confidence by relating to them what she had read. It was necessary to eat while awaiting the realization of those beautiful dreams, and as Emma and her mother were accustomed to earn little and spend much, they were soon obliged to sell their fine dresses, their chains and trinkets. When this last resource failed, quarrels supervened, then disputes, then blows; the house became a veritable hell. The father earned something by his labor; he retained the greater part, and gave but little to the mother. Emma, accustomed to fine airs, and always persuaded that her merit would be recognized sooner or later, feared to soil her hands by doing anything in the house.

Finally, they heard of the young man's marriage. It was, then, necessary to explain. Emma was large and strong; her parents required her to work, but she refused. The unfortunate girl ended by listening to the proposals of another young man, who, like the former, deserted her. We would blush to relate all the vices to which she afterwards abandoned herself. Denounced to the police for theft and other crimes, she, with many like herself, was transported to a distant island, where she died of misery, devoured by remorse.

Do not imagine, dear children, that there is any

exaggeration in the facts above cited; many might be related even more deplorable, did I not regard your youth, and the innocence of your hearts. Alas! you do not know how degraded in morals one may become who has abandoned the faith! Believe at least, those who love you, and whose only desire is your happiness. Bad reading, is, in itself, a violent and subtle poison, which gives death to the soul without her perceiving it, as the sting of the asp causes the death of the body. "Experience daily proves," says Godescard, "that a young head is easily set on fire by dangerous reading. The happiest inclinations cannot hold out against its poison. The fruit of a good education, the innocence of early years, the love of duty, all are ruined by those unhappy works." As to light reading, would you, my children, think me too severe, were I to interdict this also? I shall quote here what Mlle. Anais Martin says in a work crowned by the French Academy, which she has written especially for the young.\*

"There are," says she, "works of fiction, written perhaps in a moral tone, which do not wound what the world calls *propriety*, which cannot be ranked among bad books, and which, nevertheless, are infinitely dangerous to many among you; and, to say the least, injurious to others. I appeal to your sincerity,—what are your head and heart filled with after reading one of those works, one of those novels, which young people seek after with so much avidity?" . . . . Those who love you would wish that nothing

\* L'Amie des jeunes personnes.

should remain; but how often is the imagination carried away by the recital of fabulous adventures! how many times is the judgment perverted, the heart troubled, the love of God enfeebled! . . . . . And again, the interest attached to the personages and events which they represent, renders cold and monotonous all reading that has not such attractions; the ordinary occupations of life seem distasteful; you would wish for incidents that should raise you to the position of those heroines whose history you have read. Sometimes a young girl is led to believe herself one of those privileged creatures; she takes those imaginary personages for models, their actions as the rule of her conduct; she dreams of a husband modelled upon those of whom the novelist's pen is so prodigal, and when her parents present the man calculated to render her happy, she refuses, even without knowing him.

"For less excitable minds, for more sensible young persons, this kind of reading has still injurious effects; it causes them to view the world and life under a generally false aspect. And again, when time is so strictly measured out to us, time spent therein is much to be regretted! How many things to be done, to be learned, do we find sacrificed to the vain interest inspired by those fictitious recitals! . . . How often have not you said: 'I have no time?'. . . But you will never have it, if you squander it away on things of this kind."

To the above passage from Mlle. Martin's work, I shall add some extracts from a letter written by a

young lady to one who had formerly had charge of her education. She had strongly recommended her pupil to abstain from frivolous reading, and the maternal interest she felt, had led her to inquire from time to time, if her recommendation had been heeded. The young lady had been two years married, and was a mother, when she wrote the following :

“I have acted very wrongly in your regard, Madame, in so carefully concealing from you how little I have followed your advice in regard to light reading. Until now, I have responded to your inquiries by evasive answers ; now I shall acknowledge the whole truth ; would, alas, that I had done so sooner ! . . . My passion for reading has led me so far, that I am now in very delicate health. I have fearful headaches, and am very nervous. I feel wholly exhausted and as if destitute of strength—I, who enjoyed such good health at the convent ! I experience a general weakness and lassitude, which I cannot define, for I have no fever or other settled disease. You often threatened me with this when you used to take the books out of my hands during recreation. My physician has made me see that I have done very wrong ; he attributes my weakness to intense thought and application. I was obliged to acknowledge to him that I read almost continually, that I read sometimes instead of eating, that I read even at night, during my husband’s absence.

“To tell you who provides me with books would be useless ; they are to be found everywhere. I do not think, however, that I have read books precisely

bad, although some of them seemed to me a little suspicious. Sometimes when reading, I would think, 'Were Mme. N. to see this book in my hands, how pained she would be!' You see, my dear teacher, that I acknowledge all my weakness; I do so, that you may aid me by your prayers to correct myself. My husband has often reproved me for this fatal passion; he has reproached me, a thousand times, that I have no thought for anything else, and that my books absorb my whole attention. How often have I made persons wait in the store, where I went only with a bad grace, because I had been disturbed at my reading. I have allowed the nurse and the cook to do just as they pleased, and I see that we have not been the gainers thereby.

"In fine, dear Madame, what will most afflict you, is, that I have neglected nearly all my exercises of piety. I run hastily over my morning and night prayers, and I often forget them entirely; I go to Mass on Sundays, but I think not of what I am doing; I have not been to confession since Easter; now it is August, and I do not know whether I shall present myself for the feast of the Assumption, for I know not how to examine myself, or excite myself to contrition.

"This time, Madame, my resolution is taken; I will act according to your prudent counsel; I abandon my books; I have, at last, learned that my passion for reading *is ruinous to both body and soul!*" . . . . .

How many young girls, addicted to frivolous

reading, might make the same avowal, if they were but sincere! . . . . .

If you, my children, deny yourself such reading, you will easily find time for your exercises of piety, and the reading of good books. Open, from time to time, the *Gospels*, the *Lives of the Saints*, the *Following of Christ*, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, and other highly approved works, which will preserve your faith, strengthen your confidence in God, and excite you to love Him, and also to love your neighbor. Read a little at a time, but relish that little; meditate on it, think over it frequently; sometimes, at an opportune moment, make it the subject of conversation; relate, for example, some incident in the life of a saint, with which you have been edified, some maxim which you have relished. Your parents, absorbed in business, do not, perhaps, read such things; they will, with pleasure, hear from your lips those edifying traits, those holy maxims, and this may, sometimes, be to them the occasion of a salutary thought, and a nearer approach to God, if they have had the misfortune to withdraw themselves from Him.

If you be free to employ a great portion of your time according to your inclinations, you will do well to advance and improve your education by well-selected readings. But I exhort you, not to trust to yourselves for your choice of reading matter; consult your confessor or some experienced person, and follow his advice; to take another course, would be to expose yourselves to great danger of being deceived in an affair so important.



## CHAPTER IV.

### *AMUSEMENTS.*

God does not forbid innocent and lawful pleasures—Sentiments of the saints, also of some worldly men, on dancing and profane diversions—Legend—Sudden death at a ball—Example of a young lady compelled to attend a ball—Danger—Delights of home; family pleasures.

**T**HINK not, dear children, that I, in a harsh and severe spirit, would forbid you those amusements proper to your age. In the convent-school, even in establishments directed by cloistered religious, you were permitted to give yourselves up to innocent enjoyment, to sweet and simple pleasures; why, then, should it be a crime for you now? Did not the beloved disciple of our Lord, St. John the Evangelist, when far advanced in years, amuse himself with a partridge? When some one expressed his astonishment thereat, the apostle gently replied: "Be not surprised if I give my mind some relaxation: it is only to render it more capable of being afterwards employed in more elevated things."

"It is only gloomy and fretful minds," says Mlle. Martin,\* "that find fault with lawful pleasures; what

\* *L'Amie des jeunes personnes.*

renders them condemnable, is the abuse made of them, the inopportune time chosen for them." When one has accomplished one's duty, to take advantage of a beautiful day to view the beauties of the country, to join with some friends in an agreeable conversation, to play on an instrument, to sing, to laugh at jests, all these, says St. Francis de Sales, are recreations so innocent, that, for a proper use of them, there needs but common prudence. W

Speaking of dancing and games of chance, the same saint adds: "That playing and dancing may be lawful, we must use them as a recreation, without having any affection for them; for a short time, and not till we are weary of them; and we should use them but seldom, lest otherwise, we turn a recreation into an occupation."

One is then, you will say, permitted to dance sometimes? You have never been told the contrary, my children, when there was question of modest, moderate dancing, indulged in for simple recreation and innocent joy. Did not David dance with all his might before the ark of the Lord, when it was being carried to his house? Have not our missionaries in certain islands, tolerated this exercise even in holy ceremonies, so as to accommodate themselves to the character of the savages, who could not deprive themselves of it. And did not you, yourselves, my children, during the time of your education, give yourselves up to it with charming gayety under the very eyes of the Sisters?

Yes, dear children, I grant you, with St. Francis

de Sales, that one may sometimes dance; but, pay great attention to what I am about to remark. The dances tolerated by St. Francis de Sales, and permitted you at the convent-school, are very different from those in vogue in the world.

The first, my daughters, are in no way hurtful to modesty; the two sexes do not mix therein; there are no immodest looks or gestures; they are simply an exercise which strengthens the body, and produces no dangerous excitement.

As to the second, they are wholly different. A man who had seen much of the world, once said: "I do not think that a young lady who dances polkas, waltzes, and other dances now in fashion, can preserve her chastity."

St. Ambrose somewhere writes: "By means of dances, the devil easily operates the ruin of souls. The dance is the companion of voluptuousness and impurity. O, how sad is it to see young girls, who should guard with scrupulous attention against everything that might wound their chastity, whose modesty should be their brightest ornament, mix, without shame, with persons of the opposite sex in the midst of the dance!"

I wish, my children, again to quote St. Francis de Sales' sentiments on this subject, for many persons have abused the facility with which he seems to permit this exercise;—read the following lines and see if any one can be mistaken.

"Balls, dances, and other nocturnal assemblies, ordinarily attract the reigning vices and sins to-

gether, such as quarrels, envy, scoffing, and wanton love. And, as those exercises open the pores of the bodies of those that use them, so they also open the pores of their hearts, and expose them to the danger of some serpent's seizing the favorable opportunity to breathe some loose words or lascivious suggestions into the ear, or of some basilisk's casting an impure look, or wanton glance of love into the heart, which, being thus opened, is easily seized upon and poisoned. Those idle recreations are ordinarily very dangerous; they extinguish the spirit of devotion, and leave the soul in a languishing condition; they cool the fervor of charity, and excite a thousand evil affections in the soul."

Listen now to what has been said by a celebrated atheist\* on this subject:—"Dancing serves only to corrupt the heart and to wage a dangerous war against chastity." A man of the world,† who had experimental-knowledge of all its pleasures, writes as follows:—"I have always esteemed balls as dangerous; it is not my reason alone that has led me to this belief, it has been my experience still more, and though the testimony of the Fathers of the Church be strong, I hold, that, on this head, that of a courtier should be of much greater weight. I am well aware, that, in these pleasures, some persons run far less danger than others; nevertheless, even the coldest temperament is inflamed by them. It is generally the young that compose those assemblies, those who find difficulty enough

\* Bayle.

† The celebrated Bussy-Rabutin.

in resisting temptation in solitude—how much more then in such places! Hence, I hold that no one who is a Christian should go to balls.”

On the day of your baptism, dear children, you renounced the devil, his works and pomps; will you not fail in those sacred promises if you frequent dances? There, in particular, are to be found his abominable works and pomps. There are made the attacks of vanity, of immodest dress; there are to be found jealousy of others' merit, malignant jests, mysterious whisperings on dangerous subjects; there the heart is enervated, the imagination excited by the regular movement of a voluptuous dance, the sounds of seductive harmony; everything concurs to enkindle the fires of evil passions.

Would you, my children, when dressed for a ball, dare to kneel down and offer that action to God, as you would offer Him your sleep and your meals? What a derision it would be, were you, crowned with flowers, decked out with ribbons, laces and trinkets, to cast yourself on your knees before a crucifix, and say to our Lord: “My God, thou art crowned with thorns, thy sacred body is pierced with nails, and covered with wounds; it is to please thee and imitate thee that I have made this toilet; it is in union with thy sorrows that I am about to enjoy the pleasures of the dance. . . . Deign to accept this action, O my God, and give me thy holy benediction!”

You would immediately perceive, dear children, the impropriety of such a prayer, which would be a

veritable impiety. To whom, then, do you expect to offer an action, since, evidently, it cannot be offered to God? . . . . . To Satan, yes, to Satan; to him it belongs, it is his work, *par excellence*.

A pious grandmother, surrounded by five young girls, who were being brought up under her care, related to them the following legend:

"A young girl who had gone to a dance, perceived, as she was moving to the sound of a violin, that he with whom she was dancing, had feet and ears like those of a wild beast. It was the demon, disguised under a human form. Terrified, she wished to fly; Satan seized and bore her no one knew whither, but she was never again seen at home or in the church."

Yes, dear children, some young men who mix in the dance, are possessed with the spirit of the demon for your destruction. If, through a remnant of modesty, you should wish to turn away your eyes, and close your ears when you meet them in those parties of pleasure, they will know how to act so well, through the instigation of Satan, that they will compel you, so to say, to hear and see; and, by this means, you will soon fall a prey to the enemy of your salvation. Then you will no longer be found docile, laborious and attentive in the bosom of your family; then you will abandon the altars of God and the sanctuaries of Mary, and will find your pleasure only with the demon, your ravisher, in those places made pestilential by his impure breath, until you go to dwell in his mansion, which is hell!

Tell me, my daughters, would you wish to die at

a ball? . . . . . Such a thing is not impossible; young persons have died there! . . . Read the following occurrence, which took place not very long ago.

In a small city of the South, a young lady of distinguished family was invited to take part in the amusements of the carnival. But a short time had elapsed since her leaving school. Some days previous to Lent, she had made a visit to her former teacher, who earnestly exhorted her not to engage in those dangerous amusements so common at the approach of that holy season. The young lady thanked her for her good advice, and, perhaps, even promised to follow it; but, on returning home, she said to herself: "It is very necessary that I should know something of the world." Then, with feverish activity, she made every preparation for a magnificent toilet, as she was about to attend a ball.

Crowned with flowers, attired in white gauze trimmed with laces and ribbons, with arms and neck adorned with jewels, she entered the ball-room. The floods of light that illuminated the apartment increased the ravishing beauty of her countenance, the elegance of her dress: she had the satisfaction of beholding every gaze riveted on her in admiration. She triumphed in so brilliant a success, and the smiles she could not repress, bore witness to the happiness she felt.

The ball is opened. Delightful harmony fills the room; the dancers, moving to the sound, turn and return in measured steps; the movement changes,

and their steps become slower, then recommence with renewed ardor. They rest for awhile, and flattering compliments fly from mouth to mouth. Our young lady, agreeably excited by such delightful courtesies, joins with renewed ardor the enchanted circle. . . .

Suddenly, a cry is heard;—the dancers pause. A young man quits the ranks with hurried steps, bearing in his arms the most beautiful of the dancers—she is ill. . . . They run hither and thither, they bring essences, they unlace her, that she may breathe more freely. . . . Useless cares: she is no more! . . . The brilliant equipage which had brought her thither, radiant in beauty and full of life, bears back to her sorrow-stricken family only a corpse!

What a death, my children! Who has told you,—you who love those dangerous pleasures, those pomps of Satan,—who has promised you that the stroke of death shall not fall on you, the first time you taste their fatal poison? . . . .

In another city, at no great distance from the former, a young lady, feeling somewhat fatigued after having taken part in a ball, reëntered her carriage, and died before reaching home.

I grant, my children, that the pleasures of the dance are very seductive at your age, and that it would be difficult not to give yourselves up to it, were you strongly solicited thereto. Do like some young ladies I have known; fearing lest they should afterwards be led too far by their desires, they never learned to dance.

This art, it is said, gives grace and suppleness to a young lady's carriage; but would it not be better to remain ignorant, rather than to expose one's self to make a bad use of it in such dangerous occasions? Our Lord tells us, that it would be better to pluck out an eye, were it an occasion of sin, than, preserving both, to fall into hell; with much greater reason, would it not be better to have a less graceful carriage,—which is less precious than an eye,—and to preserve innocence?

If, my children, you be so urged to appear in those profane reunions, that you would, by a refusal, subject yourselves to angry scenes, do like the young lady of whom I am about to speak. Her mother was very fond of the world, and wished her daughter, who was about sixteen years old, to frequent balls and reunions. The pious girl respectfully represented that she could not, in conscience, do so. The mother became very angry, loaded her with reproaches, struck her in the face, and imperiously required her to obey. The daughter, after having recommended herself to the most holy Virgin, offered no more resistance to her mother's wishes, and allowed her to arrange her toilet. Nothing was spared, and the mother promised herself a brilliant success, for her daughter was very beautiful and graceful. However, she noticed in her child an indifference, which caused her some anxiety, but she persuaded herself that she would cease to be indifferent when she should appear in the beauty of her elegant attire in the midst of a brilliant circle, and

receive testimonies of admiration. She was deceived. The young lady, forced to obey, preserved a cold and grave demeanor, which disconcerted her mother. She refused to dance, and paid no attention to what passed around her. The mother, when leaving the ball, overheard some one saying maliciously, in an undertone: "Mme. de N's daughter is in truth but a beautiful image." Hurt at this remark, she ceased to torment her daughter, and left her free to follow her simple and modest tastes.

What shall I say of theatres, my children? The holy doctors of the Church describe them as the haunt and source of all the passions, particularly of impurity. They say, that those who assist at comedies, are, in some way, more guilty than the comedians themselves, because they authorize them and make them more bold and insolent; they also say that to go to comedies is to be an apostate, because they are one of the devil's pomps which one has renounced in Baptism.

To this imposing authority, I add that of a lady of great intelligence, who had frequented the theatre, and who afterwards deplored her fatal delusion.

"I clearly recognize," says she, "that the theatre has been for me an inexhaustible source of sin. I am reminded that my eyes have there been sullied by a thousand indecent images, my ears filled with a thousand impure and equivocal expressions, my mind seduced by a thousand false maxims; and I now understand that, while causing me to lose all

relish of piety, they inspired me with a taste for dissipation, pleasure, and vanity.

“And how could the theatre fail to produce all these effects? Therein are presented only the intrigues of gallantry; there no language is spoken save that of love. There modesty and reserve are represented as vain scruples; the art of pleasing and seducing, as the most precious of talents; pleasure and voluptuousness, as the sovereign good. There it is repeated, at every moment, that the heart is made only to love, and that it would be useless to try to overcome its desires, that they must be followed unresistingly; that youth is the time for pleasure; that he is his own enemy, who does not profit by it, and that there will always be time to give one’s self up to melancholy and prudence.

“What more shall I say? The charms of the music, the illusions of the decorations, the immodesty of the dress, the license of the dances; all are united in the theatre, to lull reason, to enervate the heart, and inflame the passions. There poison enters in through all the senses; the soul is, as it were, intoxicated, and in her moments of delirium, what thoughts, what desires, enter unperceived, because one is, as it were, beside one’s self, but which are none the less criminal in the eyes of Him, whose piercing glance penetrates the most hidden recesses of the conscience!”

You are then, resolved, dear children, never willingly to be present at parties of pleasure in which you might be drawn into evil; where you might see

things which would do violence to your conscience. Do not go to them even once, through pure curiosity; how often has such an imprudence proved fatal, and verified the oracle of the Holy Ghost: *He that exposes himself to danger shall perish therein!*

Is there any sweeter, any more real pleasure, my children, than that found in the midst of one's own family, and the amusements there enjoyed with one's parents and virtuous friends. And again, if you have brothers and sisters, why need you seek for other company? Could you not, for example, get up among yourselves, the representation of an historical scene, a charade, a pantomime, and have for your audience your good parents, as you had your mistresses when at school. Could you not delight them by an interesting recital, by singing one of those hymns which you sang with so much pleasure when you dwelt in the house of the Lord?

And your walks, my children? Would not they be a thousand times more agreeable in the company of your parents, your brothers and sisters, than with any one else? What more touching and edifying, than to see a truly united family enjoying together the beauties of nature on a fine day, and speaking of subjects full of innocent gayety. What are the pleasures of society compared with these?

Leave, my children, leave to worldly girls to hurry from feast to feast, from pleasure to pleasure; their hearts will never be satisfied; anxiety, trouble and remorse will incessantly pursue them.

As for you, in the bosom of your family, under

the eyes of your beloved parents, you will spend days of pure and tranquil enjoyment; you will live in peace with all, you will gain the esteem of all; and what is still better, will preserve your innocence from the shadow of those dangers to which the virtue of a worldling is exposed, and in which, alas, it is so often shipwrecked.





## CHAPTER V.

### *OF MEALS.*

They must be sanctified by purity of intention—They are remedies to be used with moderation—Example of the saints—Rules for avoiding gluttony—To behave politely at table.

**N**OT wishing, dear children, to be too severe on this subject, any more than on any other, I shall only tell you, that you may use, without scruple, every kind of food served you, according to the condition and habits of your family, and that,—apart from the fasts and abstinences prescribed by the Church, in which, after you have attained the required age, you should never fail, without serious reason,—it would not be proper for you to show any singularity in regard to your food.

Nevertheless, remember always, dear children, even in this action, so common and so humiliating, that you are Christians, that is to say, disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, who should in all things be your Model. Now, let me ask you, what was our Saviour's conduct in this action? And the Blessed Virgin, your mother and patroness, how did she take necessary nourishment? What modesty, what sobriety, what decorum in both one and the other! Their table was poorly served, but what propriety,

what noble and dignified simplicity reigned over all! What were their entertainments during their repasts! . . . . They did not refuse to be present sometimes at the feasts of the wealthy ones of the world, as we see from some passages of the Gospel. Jesus, wisdom itself, and the Master of doctors, spoke there of the kingdom of heaven and of the virtues necessary to attain it; the Blessed Virgin listened; she spoke, only when propriety or charity required it. She is your model, dear children; follow her example; modesty and reserve are so becoming to your age and sex.

St. Augustin says that repasts are remedies which must be used through necessity, in order to preserve life. But, as we use remedies only through necessity, we should eat only through the same motive. This is an excellent rule for avoiding sensuality and excess, in an action so liable to these faults. Sanctify it by pure intentions; seek less to gratify your taste than to obey God; while taking the nourishment that is to support your bodily life, think of that food of which your soul has so much need. Let the abundance and variety of the viands presented you, lead you to increased love of Him who is so liberal towards you, and excite you to serve Him more faithfully. Alas! how many poor are in want of bread, while you abound even in superfluities.

That you may not be led into faults sometimes committed at table, think how holy penitents, and fervent religious in their cloisters, in the spirit of

penance and mortification, deny themselves all that could flatter the taste. You, perhaps, have offended God more than they have; nevertheless you deprive yourself of nothing. Think, also, how many damned souls are suffering in hell and eternal hunger, because of the excesses they committed in eating and drinking while on earth.

St. Louis de Gonzague deprived himself, in the court of princes and in his father's palace, of all that could flatter his taste. He contented himself with a little bread and water, and, in order to conceal his mortification, he used to say, that this diet was necessary to his health. When he entered the Society of Jesus, his superiors obliged him to moderate his excessive austerities, which he did through obedience. He once remarked, in confidence, that, were he to return to the world, he would fear to disedify those who had seen him before, and who might think he had become relaxed in religion.

St. Euphrasia, a near relation of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, having consecrated herself to God at the age of seven years, renounced, with a generosity far beyond her age, all the delights of family life, the care and caresses of her mother, who loved her tenderly, to enter into a monastery in which the religious eat only bread and water. At the age of twelve years she lost her mother, and became heiress to an immense fortune. The emperor, who was interested in the young orphan, wrote to her, inviting her to return to court, where he had chosen a husband worthy of her, and where it would

be more easy for her to procure everything she desired.

Euphrasia replied to the emperor in the following terms: "My Lord, I am grateful at finding you still remember me; but I freely abandon everything earthly to assure to myself the goods of heaven. A little bread and water, a coarse garment, is sufficient for your servant. If the memory of my father is dear to you, if my mother's virtues merit your regard, deign, my lord, to leave their daughter in peace, in the asylum she has chosen. Give liberty to all my slaves, recompense those who have been engaged in my parents' service, sell all that I possess, and give what remains to the poor. As to the spouse you have promised me, he is mortal like other men, and I know him not. I myself have chosen another, who is immortal; I have sworn inviolable fidelity to Him. Suffer, O my lord, suffer your servant to keep her engagement, and to think no longer of all that is perishable."

The emperor and empress could not restrain their tears while reading this letter. They executed the wishes of the youthful Euphrasia, and allowed her to serve God in her monastery, where she persevered in the exercise of the most austere penance. She fasted every day, and occupied herself in the lowest and most severe kinds of labor. She prepared bread for the community, chopped the wood, carried stones for the buildings, which did not prevent her from being, at the age of eighteen, the strongest religious of her community, the most beautiful and robust.

The Church celebrates her festival on the 13th of March.

Madame Louise of France, was, when in her father's court, extremely hard to please at table; scarcely any one could succeed in preparing viands to her taste, and she was nearly always in ill-health. At the Carmelite house of St. Denis, where she made her profession at the age of thirty years, she found health and strength; and she used to say pleasantly, that the vegetables and soups of Carmel were far more delicious than the viands which had been served her at court, and that her stomach found them infinitely better.

The vice of gluttony, dear children, is low and mean; nevertheless, although your reason shows you its baseness, although you have taken strong resolutions to guard against it, you will be sometimes tempted to fail in this point. Occasions will present themselves so frequently, you will be so often urged thereto, by examples and solicitations, that it will be difficult for you to remain within the bounds of necessity. However, I do not think you capable of committing such excess as to compromise your health and cause you to be ashamed; hence, it is not of such excesses I am about to speak. But, in the world, where many live only by the senses, and for the gratification of the senses, people sometimes permit themselves, on this point, many things which ill agree with piety; thus, to eat out of meals, to seek to gratify one's tastes, to take delight in what pleases them, to make the nourishment of the body

an important affair, to be too much occupied about it, to display therein a certain delicacy, to find in it one's pleasure and almost one's happiness—these are faults now very common in the world, and against which even pious persons are not sufficiently on their guard.

They are nevertheless wholly opposed to the spirit of Christianity, which is a spirit of mortification. Avoid them, dear children, and, without imposing on yourselves privations that would be prejudicial to your health, and which God does not ask from you, —know how to restrain yourselves within just bounds. To this end, conform yourselves to the following rules:

1st. Take nothing between meals, except through necessity, and sometimes through complaisance. Certain young girls are always provided with bonbons and sweetmeats, which they take every few moments; this habit, which is very prejudicial to the health, also indicates a great tendency to gluttony.

2d. Accustom yourselves to eat indifferently of whatever is set before you, without seeking that which flatters your taste, or refusing what is contrary to it, unless it should be injurious to your health. In this there is, sometimes, a great act of mortification, and, consequently, much merit before God.

3d. Estimate, as near as you can, what amount of nourishment you need to preserve your health and strength; exceed this quantity but rarely, and only on occasions when you might be remarked.

4th. Never complain of the unskilfulness of the cooks, the poor quality of the food, or of anything regarding nourishment; let all this be indifferent to you, particularly in the houses of others. In your own house, if you have charge of those matters, try to please your parents; do your best to have everything as it should be, but as regards yourselves personally, remain perfectly indifferent.

Politeness has introduced a great many customs at table to which it is necessary to conform one's self, trifling as they may appear. Knowledge of those customs and exactitude in following them, constitutes, in part, what we call the *savoir-vivre*. There is a simple means by which to guard against failing in them when abroad; it is to accustom one's self to them at home;—excepting the exigencies of ceremony, the requirements of politeness are nearly everywhere the same, but they are so minute, that I renounce the idea of giving them here in detail. The customs of society, and particularly the good habits you have acquired during your education, both at home and at school, are the best lessons on this subject, and you must never forget them.





## CHAPTER VI.

### *ORDER AND CLEANLINESS.*

Their importance—Care necessary to their preservation. Forgetfulness of that care infinitely injurious to young persons—Diana de Chateau-Morand—Neatness of linen and clothing.

**N**OTHING is so repulsive in a young girl as disorder and uncleanness. Be extremely careful, then, my children, that nothing, either in your person or your surroundings, gives evidence of these defects.

It is not a rare thing to find young ladies,—once they are free from the surveillance of their mistresses, and have no longer to dread their observation,—give way to an untidiness that is almost disgusting. Disorder reigns over their apartments; their closets and wardrobes are always in confusion; if they want something, everything must be upset, in order to find it. They do not know how to take care of anything. Hence, if they have a passable article of dress, they must wear it every day; they have neither foresight nor economy. The different articles of their attire are ill-assorted or unbecomingly arranged; something is wrong with their shoes or their head-dress, or their skirts or other garments are kept on them only by some contrivance.

If, on certain occasions, they wish to be better dressed, they have to look for so many things, to arrange or adjust them, that they are never ready in time.

Better order and more foresight, would do away with all these inconveniences.

Whatever your fortune may be, my children, you should pay attention to points of order and economy; if you neglect them, your servants will not be more particular, and your house will soon be topsy-turvy.

It is sometimes surprising, to see young ladies, good enough otherwise, so far forget themselves on this point, through carelessness, thoughtlessness, or the wish to avoid giving themselves any trouble. They allow the dust to enter everywhere, rather than take the trouble of closing the doors and windows. They disarrange the furniture, stain the floors and carpets, spill water and even oil on their dress, for want of due precaution; they care not whether their surroundings be neat or otherwise; they prefer to soil their clothes, or breathe a bad odor, rather than clean the apartments and furniture. Such carelessness is disgusting; it is, however, only too common. I ardently desire, my children, that you be free from this reproach.

Know, also, that want of order and cleanliness may lower your standing in society, and even be an obstacle to your being suitably established in the world.

We read in the *Ecole des mœurs*, that a young lady of good family, called Diana de Château-Morand, espoused the eldest son of a rich and noble family,

She had every advantage that could make a young lady be sought after; wealth, high birth, beauty, youth and talent. Nevertheless, her husband, disgusted at length by her disorder and want of cleanliness, sought after and found pretexts for a divorce. One of his brothers loved Diana; he obtained the dispensation, and married her. But, conquered in turn, by the same repugnance, and finding he could not prevail on his wife to take more care of her person, he also separated from her.

Every husband who has to complain of his wife's disorder and uncleanness, does not proceed to this extremity. But how often does this negligence give them an occasion for venting their ill-humor, bursting out into reproaches, making bitter complaints, and even raising disputes? It must be admitted, that men, generally speaking, do not know how to take those minute cares exacted by order and propriety, but they wish their wives to attend to them for both. You must not complain of this, my children. They have more serious and important duties for the advantage of their families, and domestic cares are assigned to women.

Remember, moreover, that external propriety is regarded by the saints as the index of the good order and purity of the soul. God, in the ancient law, made a multitude of ordinances to be maintained among his people; every one was bound to observe many purifications and numberless precautions.

Although, in the new law, we have no precise

command on this point, the example of the saints and the practice of the Church, which requires such strict cleanliness and order in her temples and everything employed in the divine service, clearly shows us the esteem we should have for cleanliness in general, and in particular, for that of our bodies, which are the living temples of God.

Never wear your linen or other garments in a soiled or untidy condition; attend carefully to your hair; wash yourself very frequently, your hands and face many times a day, if you find it necessary. Let your shoes and stockings be always in good condition. Put everything in order in your room, around your bed, in your wardrobes and closets; do not leave them to be attended to by your mothers, your sisters, or your domestics. Help them, on the contrary, to establish the same arrangement throughout the house, and be solicitous to have it constantly maintained therein.

When your linen is brought back from the wash, examine it carefully, and lay aside whatever needs mending; put the rest away in your closets, and mend, as soon as possible, what you have laid aside; if you allow it to accumulate, you will never be able to get through with it.

As soon as you perceive that buttons, hooks or eyes, or a few stitches, are wanting to any article of dress, attend to it immediately, and act not like some negligent young girls, who, instead of this, change their clothes, and soon have their whole wardrobe in bad condition.

Pay the same attention to the clothing of your father, your brothers, or younger sisters; thus you will relieve your mother of much solicitude, and everybody will be thankful to you.

Lay aside your fine linen and best garments for Sundays and festivals, for visits and other occasions which demand a more careful toilet. Be saving of expensive articles; economy is the sister of order; a young girl who is careless, spends much on her toilette, but it is none the better for it.

I regret to say, that I have sometimes met with young ladies, who, although extravagantly provided with articles of luxury and vanity, had not sufficient changes of linen to meet the requirements of decency and cleanliness. Would it not have been better for them to have had fewer rich robes, fewer articles of jewelry, and have been suitably provided with other things?

You are convinced of this, dear children; hence, with you, the useful and necessary will take precedence of the brilliant, and your wardrobe will be well furnished with linen, if not of extreme fineness, at least of irreproachable whiteness, and kept in perfect order.





## CHAPTER VII.

### *VANITY IN DRESS, AND ITS DANGERS.*

Not to be too particular about dress—Faults to which vanity leads—  
Frightful death of one addicted to vanity—St. Febronia, virgin  
and martyr—One should make little account of beauty—Courage  
shown by a young lady, whose beauty exposed her to many dan-  
gers—St. Francis de Sales' sentiments on the subject of vanity  
and adornment.

**I**S you should be extremely attentive to preserve  
order and cleanliness in all things, dear chil-  
dren, so also, should you avoid vain and  
studied elegance and superfluity in dress.  
This advice may not, perhaps, be agreeable to young  
ladies of a certain class, who concern themselves too  
much about their apparel, and pay more attention to  
it than is necessary, but I delight to think that the  
greater number of you will relish it, and be anxious  
to conform your conduct thereto. I am fully aware,  
my children, that attention should be paid to the  
toilet, nor would I approve of those who should ren-  
der themselves ridiculous by too great negligence;  
but I am also aware, that, under pretext of this rea-  
sonable care, some make dress their great, almost  
their only solicitude. They inquire anxiously about  
the fashions, examine and compare them, talk about

them incessantly; they blame, approve, criticise, laugh at their friends, turn into ridicule their style of dress, envy the *happiness* of those who can display a richer toilet, and are unhappy when they cannot have the same luxuries; they spend hours, even entire mornings, in trying first one article, then another; they turn and turn over again a ribbon, velvet, lace, and they spend a considerable time before the glass, engaged in acts I should blush to mention.

Nor is this all; in trying to alter and regulate their shape, they often injure their health, they torture themselves; they constrain themselves to take certain manners, certain airs, which they believe to be more elegant or refined; they lace themselves so tightly as almost to prevent respiration; they use certain kinds of food, or lessen its quantity, that they may not become stout, or coarse looking, as they are pleased to term it.

The foolish passion of vanity sometimes leads persons to commit even more serious faults. For example, have not young girls been known to steal from their own family and others, considerable sums to satisfy their inordinate desire for vain ornaments? Have not others, for the same end, received presents they had no right to accept, and thus seriously compromised their reputation?

Assuredly, my children, you will not fall into these excesses, but you will undoubtedly be drawn into another, not less fatal, if you do not incessantly combat the inclination you all have towards vanity.

This evil, which I would wish to preserve you from,

at any and every cost, is forgetfulness of God and the things of eternity, into which you will fall, if you be too much preoccupied about the vanities of the world and temporal things.

Remark, that this inclination leads you to occupy yourself continually about your body, which is but dust and corruption, to the prejudice of your soul, which is immortal; it draws you to seek the contemptible things of the world, its praises, its flatteries, the gratification of self-love, and causes you to neglect the duty of pleasing God, by fervent prayers, pious reading, and works of piety. Under its pernicious influence, you will seek, by the vain arts of dress, to win the homage of men, and will neglect to adorn your soul with virtues which can alone attract to her the regard of God and His angels.

Remember, dear children, that you have but few years to spend on earth. If you employ them only in the adornment of your body, oh! how poor and naked will your soul appear at the judgment-seat of God! Ere long, death will destroy that edifice of clay which you so incessantly flatter and adorn; it will become the food of worms;—God grant that your soul be not, at the same time, devoured by the remorse that never dies, and by demons who covet it, as a prey which is their due!

I have heard a missionary relate the frightful death of a young girl addicted to vanity. I will record it here; may it make a salutary impression on your minds!

A young girl, utterly spoiled by her parents, had

the additional misfortune of being passionately fond of dress. She had, on certain occasions, been told that she was beautiful; flattered at this, she entertained the hope that her beauty would, one day, raise her to an exalted position. Hence her daily care, I might almost say, her every thought, was to display to advantage, and enhance by a thousand artifices, the natural graces she possessed, and of which she was infinitely jealous. Wholly absorbed by this care, she neglected everything else; her education was very superficial, her character violent, haughty, and self-willed. As to piety, it might be said, with truth, that she was destitute of it. She attended church on Sundays, but it was rather to display her vain ornaments and attract attention, than to pray. It is true, that, in the city where she dwelt, not one could compare with her in beauty, in natural grace, or the exquisite taste displayed in her toilet. For a short time she enjoyed this glory, if such it may be called, and her heart, fully gratified, took complacency in the thought, that one of the adorers of her beauty would demand of her parents the happiness of being united with her, and, by his immense fortune, gratify the most ardent desires of her heart. But Divine Providence had other and very different designs.

A slow malady, the germ of which the young lady had possessed from infancy, finally prevented her from leaving her room. The disease made slow progress. Soon the beautiful carnation of her cheeks gave place to excessive paleness; her eyes became

sunk in their sockets, and her whole body frightfully emaciated.

Nevertheless, the poor young girl knew not the gravity of the evil, and dreamed not of regulating the affairs of her conscience, to appear before the Sovereign Judge. Her parents, who had hoped that care would restore her health, could no longer deceive themselves. They were anxious to send for the priest; they would not wish their child to die like a heretic. . . . But how could they make such a proposition to the patient? . . . . One day, the mother hazarded a few words on the subject; her daughter burst into angry exclamations, accused her mother of wishing to hasten her death, and assured her that she was still quite strong, and would, in a few days, be better. Seeing that her mother had not much faith in her assertion, she exclaimed with vivacity: "To prove to you, mamma, that I am not as ill as you say, I will immediately dress myself and walk in my room. Bring me my most beautiful dress, my richest jewels. If I must die, as you seem to take pleasure in believing, I shall, at least, have the pleasure of being dressed once more. . . . Arrange my hair; put in it those flowers I wore at the last soirée I attended; everybody said I looked so well, and that my toilet was ravishing."

The mother, with tearful eyes, did what her child desired; some friends came in and helped to complete the toilet! . . . . Everything being arranged, the sick girl asked to be led before the mirror; her mother and her friends tried in vain to dissuade her;

she insisted. Supported in their arms, she walked a few steps, stood before the glass, and uttered a cry of terror, when she perceived her image. It was, in effect, a fearful sight, to behold that skeleton, adorned as if for a feast. "Ah!" cried she, casting herself into her mother's arms, "Ah, mamma, what has become of me?" Her mother supported her, and pressed her to her heart! . . . . Alas, the form she held was but a corpse! . . . . Her child was dead!! dead in the exercise of a favorite passion, which, throughout her life, had made her neglect her religious duties! . . . dead, without confession!!! . . . .

Beside this terrifying example, I shall place another, which will, I hope, produce on your mind an impression not less salutary, although more sweet and consoling. In it you will perceive, dear children, the power of grace in a young girl, feeble, and subject to the attacks of the passions like yourselves, but whose good-will merited for her an extraordinary succor, to triumph at once, over the devil, nature and herself.

In the reign of Diocletian, there flourished, in a city of Syria, a community of virgins, over which Brienne, a lady of remarkable merit, was superior. With her lived her niece, Febronia, who, although young, had consecrated herself to God. Heaven had been pleased to endow this angelic creature with most perfect beauty, and an incomparable piety. Febronia had a sovereign contempt for all that the world holds dear, and found her delight only in the exercise of prayer, and the practice of virtue. She

loved to be dressed in the coarsest garments, fasted almost daily, labored continually, and sought every occasion of practising humility and charity. Despite the austerity of her life, her beauty, far from diminishing, seemed only to grow more brilliant from day to day. The pious virgin dreaded extremely to be seen by worldly persons, and took as much pains to remain in solitude and conceal the gifts which nature had lavished on her, as worldly young ladies take in displaying their beauty, and heightening their charms.

Notwithstanding her care and her aunt's precautions, it became known throughout the city that there was in that community a young lady of extraordinary beauty and accomplishments, and many persons desired to see her. Febronia became alarmed. She begged her aunt not to oblige her to appear in the parlor, and to permit her to observe the most severe cloister.

Brienne willingly granted her wishes, but God had extraordinary designs over the youthful virgin, and He willed that the gifts with which He had endowed her, should contribute to His greater glory.

Silenus, an implacable enemy of the Christians, governed Syria, with his nephew Lysimachus. The latter, the son of a Christian mother, had no design of persecuting the faithful; he had even made arrangements with the general of the army to protect them, but the ferocious Silenus acted far otherwise.

Having heard of that pious community of virgins,

which was the admiration of all Syria, and that among them there lived, in absolute retreat, a young lady of rare beauty, he resolved, through the instigation of the demon, to make her renounce Christianity, and give her to his nephew in marriage.

By his orders, the soldiers went to the monastery and dragged Febronia from her aunt's arms, without being moved by the tears of the community, or the cries of the innocent victim. They loaded her with chains, and dragged her violently beyond the precincts of the house of God.

"Pray for me, my sisters," said Febronia, with many tears; "through your prayers, I hope to triumph over hell and its agents. Farewell, dear aunt," added she, "I will be worthy of you, worthy of the favors of God, by the omnipotent grace, which you will beg for me of that Heavenly Spouse to whom I am consecrated."

The Christian virgin traversed the city in the midst of an immense multitude, and arrived at the governor's tribunal. "Who are you, young girl?" demanded he.

Febronia, up to that time, like the timid dove which had never left the nest, found herself, on a sudden, vested, through grace from on high, with extraordinary courage. With majestic firmness, she replied: "My lord, I am a slave; my master is Jesus Christ, my Saviour, the only true God, whom I adore, and to whom I have been consecrated from my earliest infancy."

The gentle, yet firm accents of her voice, her eyes

illuminated by a celestial fire, the nobility of her demeanor, her beauty, her youth, (she was only eighteen years old,) affected the spectators; Silenus himself was moved. Febronia alone remained calm and peaceful; her heart, united to God by fervent prayer, implored the succor of heaven in the combat she was sustaining for the blessed name of her Saviour.

"Young girl," said the judge, "abjure a master so little worthy of you; sacrifice to the gods of the empire, and I will espouse you to this nobleman, my nephew; by this alliance you will become the first lady in the province."

So saying, he made a sign that her chains should be removed, but Febronia, embracing joyfully the irons with which she was loaded, exclaimed: "O my lord, leave me these glorious chains! . . . . They are the only ornament I covet; I have never worn any so beautiful. These chains bind me more strictly to the Divine Spouse, whom I have chosen. No, my lord, no; never shall I be wanting in the fidelity I have vowed to Him. I know you will threaten me with the torments of death; do not think to terrify me. My God will combat with me, and His love will make all torments agreeable to me."

"Young girl," replied Silenus, with feigned gentleness, "life presents itself to you under pleasant auspices; your incomparable beauty, the natural graces lavished on your person, assure you the constant love of him whom I wish to give you as your

spouse, as well as a distinguished rank among persons of your own sex. Do not, by your obstinacy, lose so many advantages; offer incense to our gods, and show, by that act, that you are grateful for the gifts they have bestowed upon you."

"My lord," replied Febronia with much animation, "your gods are but powerless idols; were I to yield to your suggestions, I should be sacrificing to the demon. To God alone, the true God, the sole Creator of heaven and earth, do I owe my existence. The gifts which you exalt in me, are nothing in comparison with His grace and love, which I am infinitely jealous to preserve, even at the cost of my life. Behold me, ready to engage in the combat, my lord; command, hasten the execution of your designs against me. I deliver to you this body of dust, or, rather, I sacrifice it to my God who has sacrificed Himself for me."

Silenus became furious at this response. He caused the saint to be scourged with whips, loaded with plummets of lead, and her teeth and bones to be broken with frightful instruments. Amidst such dreadful tortures, Febronia remained unshaken, and her soul was overwhelmed with ineffable joy.

Finally, the tyrant commanded her to be beheaded, and thus opened for her the gates of heaven.

The spectators, moved to tears, and full of admiration for such heroic courage, cursed the cruelty of the judge. The latter, furious at having been vanquished by a young girl, left the prætorium to commit suicide, while Lysimachus, the general of the army,

and many others, were converted to the Christian faith. The Church honors this illustrious virgin on the 25th of June.

Although we, my children, no longer live in the heroic ages of faith, nevertheless we may still find many illustrious examples of piety, wisdom, modesty and contempt of the world among young persons. These will serve to condemn, at the last day, those who shall have preferred vain delights to their duty.

It is said, that virtue and beauty are rarely united. I believe this, because it rarely happens that a young lady, thus favored by nature, has sufficient sense and judgment to despise this frivolous advantage. Nevertheless, we sometimes see the contrary. I have an example of this before me, in an excellent work,\* and I take pleasure in quoting it.

Francis I., passing through Manosque, a city of Provence, lodged at the house of a man, whose daughter had been chosen to present to the king the keys of the city. The young girl was very beautiful, and the king could not refrain from showing that he was enchanted by her charms; but she, modest as an angel, far from rejoicing at having won the king's admiration, was inconsolable thereat. On this account, as soon as she had returned home, she took a chafing-dish, put sulphur in it, and held her face over it, so as to disfigure herself. Her stratagem was successful; she became unrecognizable. There were not wanting persons to convey the news to the king; he was struck at hearing of this act of heroic virtue,

\* *Les Pieux Souvenirs du pensionnat.*—Par M. l'Abbé Sauson.

and wishing to give her a token of his esteem, he settled on her a considerable dowry.

I conclude this chapter, my children, by quoting some passages from St. Francis de Sales on vanity:

"Women who are vain, are esteemed to be very weak in chastity; at least, if they are chaste, it is not to be discovered amidst so many toys and fopperies. They say they mean no evil; but I reply, that the devil thinks very differently. I would have devout men and women the best dressed of the company, but the least pompous, the least affected; I would have them adorned with gracefulness, decency and dignity."

"As to the matter, form and decency of dress," says the same Saint, "it should be considered according to the several circumstances of the time, the age, the quality, the company, and the occasions."\*

He then explains those different circumstances, and I agree most cordially with him in granting to youth more freedom in this matter; for no one would wish to see you dressed like your grandmothers, or like mourning widows. But again, you should attend to your toilet with moderation, with a certain detachment of heart, and a veritable contempt for all such trifles. Conform to the fashion, since such is the custom, so long as modesty, a young girl's most beautiful ornament, is not offended by it, but follow it in moderation, and laugh at its caprices. Never let such things be your topic of conversation; make no remarks, either to your friends or others,

\* Introduction to a Devout Life. Part III., ch. xxvi.

which might lead them to suspect that you attached any value to vain ornaments or transitory beauty; finally, my children, attach yourselves to what is true and solid: to virtue, the qualities of the heart, to the imperishable goods of eternity. Frequently meditate on the nothingness of transitory things, the beauty of heaven, on the shortness of time compared with eternity, on the value of your soul and the happiness it will find with God after this life. Thus shall you moderate your inclination to vanity, and destroy it by degrees; thus, in fine, shall you be victorious over one of the principal enemies to virtue in youth.





## CHAPTER VIII.

### *OF OUTWARD DEPORTMENT AND A REASONABLE CARE OF THE HEALTH.*

Importance of polite deportment—A few rules on this point—One is bound to preserve the health, and avoid what might injure it—Not to show too great a delicacy—To bear trifling indispositions courageously—Rules to be observed in sickness.

**W**HILE endeavoring to warn you against vanity, dear children, I have spoken, also, of the proper care of your toilet, and of the extreme attention you should pay to the preservation of cleanliness in yourself and your surroundings. I wish now to speak of your deportment and of the proper care of your health.

You are still at an age, in which habits are easily contracted; take care that you adopt only good ones; be, also, on your guard against dangerous or injurious attitudes. I speak not of those wholly improper and contrary to modesty. You know, my daughters, that such things would be more than a failure in politeness; they would be an offence against God, and might, perhaps, lead others to offend Him. You have too great a horror for even the shadow of sin, to make it necessary for me to speak on this point; what I desire to recommend to

you here, is always to preserve a becoming and dignified demeanor, which inspires good-will and commands respect. This point is of the utmost importance to young ladies.

The polite deportment of which I desire to speak, consists not so much in the firm and upright attitude of body, as in the regularity and direction of the movements. There must be no affectation in your demeanor, but only a proper guard over yourself, in no way hurtful to naturalness and simplicity.

You have often heard it said, that we generally judge by his manner, a person with whom we cannot converse. This happens ordinarily in the world, and one is not always deceived in the judgment thus formed. You know the opinion which St. Gregory and St. Basil conceived of Julian, nephew of Constantine the Great, the first time they met the young prince. He was studying at Athens with much success, and appeared then to be animated with very good sentiments. Nevertheless the two saints, after they had seen him, exclaimed; "What a monster the empire is nourishing within its bosom!"

Alas! they were not deceived. Julian, when raised to the empire, renounced Christianity, reëstablished idolatry and persecuted the faithful, which acquired for him the surname of *the Apostate*. What could have given St. Basil and St. Gregory such a presentiment of what was to befall that unhappy prince? His manner, his gait, the expression of his countenance. He changed his position at every moment, laughed immoderately loud; turned his

head rudely from side to side, gesticulated, raised his voice, knitted his brows, in a word, gave no external evidence of propriety or regularity.

Be on your guard, my children, lest the like judgment be passed upon you. Pay particular attention to a wise regulation of your manners; you should endeavor to perfect yourselves in this respect. I exhort you to do so for the honor of your families, and the credit of the religious houses in which you have been educated. I exhort you to it more especially, because this is an almost certain means of preserving yourselves from some dangers, to which carelessness of attitude and freedom of manners might expose your virtue. It is well known, that nothing so much overawes importunate persons, bold or ill-mannered young men, as the modest and dignified demeanor of a young lady.

Whether you be seated or standing, writing or working, do not lean your body on one side, neither stoop over, nor loll back.

Always keep your head firm and erect. When in company, it is not permitted you to take an attitude which would indicate fatigue or weariness; to lean against the mantel-piece, or any article of furniture, to rest your head on your hands, to touch with your hands the persons to whom you are speaking, or even any part of their dress, to laugh loudly, to speak in a high tone; all these are acts of impoliteness, often found in children, but of which you are most certainly corrected.

The motions of your hands and arms should be

gentle and moderate; vehement gestures are supremely ridiculous.

While speaking or listening, be careful not to toy with what comes under your hands; to stir or move your chair and limbs is very improper.

Signs and winks given by stealth are an evidence of vulgarity. Were any one to be so impertinent as to address you sometimes in this manner, you should pretend not to perceive it.

A word now, dear children, regarding your health. After virtue, it is heaven's best gift. In reality, what are fortune and pleasure compared with health? Naturally speaking, can there even be any enjoyment without it?

Most certainly, my children, there is great merit before God in habitual suffering, when one patiently endures the pains sent by Divine Providence; but to become sick through one's own fault, is a great misfortune. God has given you health, that you may serve Him the more fervently, that you may assist your neighbor, according to your means and position; consequently, you would not be corresponding to the will of God, were you not to attend to your health.

Nevertheless, my children, do not think that I would wish to engage you in those minute and over-exact cares, which young persons sometimes take to preserve themselves from the slightest indisposition; on the contrary, I hope you will despise all the refinements of delicacy, all that can flatter softness and sensuality, as being beneath a Christian young lady.

What I understand by a necessary care of your health, is, especially, the avoiding of certain excesses, such as reading too long at night, extreme sensibility, which might, at times, occasion excessive weeping, a weariness voluntarily entertained, by refusing everything that might distract your thoughts, a pleasing work engaged in for too long a time, which might fatigue the head or chest, etc. Such things exhaust the physical and mental faculties, and in these points you should make caprice and fancy yield to reason and the will of God.

Learn, moreover, my children, to support certain slight indispositions without troubling everybody around you. What more ridiculous than a young girl, who, for some slight pain in the head or stomach, throws the whole house into a commotion. One would think she was about to swoon away; she must be put to bed, laid on the softest cushions, and moved a hundred times, to find the easiest position; she must have all the remedies in the drug store, must try every perfume and essence. Her mother weeps in grief; everything and everybody is disturbed; friends and neighbors run from every direction, servants surround the agonizing sufferer, who, most frequently, has only an excessive delicacy of the nerves, which a little courage would easily overcome.

This manner of acting, although so very ridiculous, is common enough with some young ladies; they think to render themselves interesting, by showing that they have delicate nerves.

Believe me, my children, people are not deceived;

they know how to qualify that pretended delicacy. Be more sensible, strong and courageous; endure without complaint those slight pains which pass away without any remedy; do so, first, in the spirit of penance, then, to spare much anxiety to those who love you, and who are alarmed at your slightest indispositions.

If, however, you should feel some serious indisposition, make it known to your mother, or others interested in you, and submit with docility to the prescriptions of the physician. Gratefully acknowledge the attention bestowed upon you; ask with simplicity for what you think would relieve you, and avoid all caprices, which although, doubtless, excused in the sick, nevertheless add very much to the labors of those who wait on them.

In sickness, especially, one's character and virtue are revealed. If you do not habituate yourself to sweetness and patience while in health, you will be violent, irritable, impatient and insupportable during sickness, and will thus lose the merit of your sufferings before God.

And yet this merit is very great, if we be careful to unite our sufferings to those of our Lord, and endure them uncomplainingly, regarding ourselves as justly punished because of our sins, and accept remedies, restraints and pains, in the spirit of penance. The saints regarded maladies as the greatest favors of God, and rejoiced to suffer them. Learn, at least, from their example, to accept them with resignation.



## CHAPTER IX.

### HUMAN RESPECT.

Purity of intention—Contempt for the praise or blame of the world—What it is to be ashamed of Jesus Christ—Examples of Christian firmness—St. Julia, virgin and martyr.

HERE is, my children, a snare laid by the demon, into which young persons easily fall—*human respect*, or a dread of the censure of men, which hinders us from accomplishing our duty.

Human respect, dear children, is baseness and cowardice; a great, generous, and courageous soul despises it. In effect, what matters the praise or blame of creatures? What can they add to, or withdraw from our merit? Would it not be better to win the approbation of the good, than to study so much to satisfy the wicked? God will one day judge us, will decide our fate for all eternity; it is, then, God whom you should desire to please, without troubling yourself about *what they will say*. Besides, my children, do what you will, you will never succeed in pleasing the world. It has no fixed judgment, it is continually contradicting itself. It will blame you if you do well, it will blame you if you do ill. This is always the case; you cannot

change it. If you faithfully accomplish your duties as Christians, it will laugh at you, call you *devotees*, *hypocrites*; if, in the wish to please it, you occupy yourself with its vanities and pleasures, it will laugh at you just the same, will attribute to you intentions you have never had, will calumniate you, will prepare bitter deceptions for you, will raise up bitter rivals against you; then it will mock at your chagrins and jealousies. Sometimes it will pretend to applaud you; but, believe me, only to slander you the more bitterly in the end. Ask those who know the world, if this picture is overdrawn? Ah! dear children, is it possible, that, to this world, so insincere, so wicked, so treacherous, you would sacrifice the peace of your conscience, and your eternal happiness? When you wish to be virtuous, you tremble at the thought of incurring its censures, yet when you enter on the path of vice, you expose yourselves to its most malicious shafts. What is to be done in these extremities? I will tell you: *laugh at the world*, despise its judgments, and aim direct at the noble end, which every Christian should propose to himself,—to please God, to accomplish His holy law.

Our Lord tells us that He will deny before His Heavenly Father, those who shall have been ashamed of Him before men. And what is it to be ashamed of Jesus Christ, if not to fear to show ourselves Christians, lest we be blamed by the enemies of God and religion? If, for instance, you were, in company, to hear religion and its ministers defamed,

yet would not dare to show your displeasure at such discourse; were you to laugh and divert yourselves on this subject as others do, for fear of being considered *devotees*, then you would be ashamed of Jesus Christ.

If, invited to a party of pleasure or dangerous reunion, you refuse not to attend lest you be considered singular, or draw on yourselves the railleries of the world, then you will be ashamed of Jesus Christ.

If, urged by your friends to follow a fashion not very modest, you yield to their solicitations for fear of appearing ridiculous in company with those of your own age, who make no scruple of adopting it, then you will be ashamed of Jesus Christ.

If, being urged to read a bad book, you feed your mind and heart with such deadly poison for fear of disobliging the person who presents it, you will then be ashamed of Jesus Christ.

If, at table, you be pressed to eat flesh meat on days of abstinence, and yield, lest you be considered too scrupulous, you will then be ashamed of Jesus Christ.

If, desirous of frequently approaching the sacraments because of the necessities of your soul, you fail to do so, lest you might be remarked and criticised, you are again ashamed of Jesus Christ, and conceal, as far as you can, that you are His servants, as if it were a dishonor, a disgrace to serve the King of Heaven.

The son of an honest peasant being placed at col-

lege, in a small town in the eastern part of France, distinguished himself among his companions, by his brilliant success, but, yet more, by his great pride. His father, who loved him to excess, deprived himself of everything to keep him well-dressed, and abundantly provided with everything he required, so that the young man was thought to belong to a wealthy family.

One holiday his father called for him, and took him with him into a *café*, where they met, by chance, some students of the same college. Astonished at seeing their fellow-student with one who looked like a poor countryman, they accosted him, and asked in a low voice, who was this strange looking personage. "*He is my farmer*," whispered he, coloring violently. "Your farmer, wretch!" indignantly exclaimed the father, who had overheard the words. "I, your farmer!. . . . Learn, gentlemen," said he, turning towards the young men, "learn that I am his father." Then giving his son a smart blow with a stick on the shoulders, he said: "And you, miserable, proud wretch, learn that to me you owe the respect and honor of a father, although I am only a peasant. . . . Ungrateful that you are, I deprive myself of everything for you, and see how you treat me! . . . . I see now it was folly to put you to study; it only makes you proud, but I will soon settle you!" He immediately took him home, and from that time forth, put him to work in the fields.

No one will deny that this good peasant had reason to be indignant at his son's conduct. Our

Lord also, will be indignant at you, dear children, if you be ashamed to declare yourselves His faithful servants before an impious world, which rails against and blasphemes Him. Imitate two pious young ladies, whom I am about to hold up to you as examples of very remarkable firmness.

They had only just finished their education, and were between thirteen and fourteen years old. Being invited to a grand banquet, given at the house of one of their relations on a Friday, they refused all flesh meat, despite many cutting hints and allusions thrown out on the subject by some of the company, and contented themselves with simple fare. A gentleman, near them at table, tried to tempt them, and urged them to take the meat, but they politely refused. At the end of the repast, this person, who was an aged man of great respectability, said in presence of the guests: "These two young girls have given us all a lesson of courage and firmness. They have followed their conscience and acted according to their religious principles, without fearing the blame and censure of which they have been the objects. I admire them, and believe them most worthy of esteem and consideration." The greater number of the guests applauded the homage thus rendered to courageous virtue.

Here is another instance of courage truly heroic.

The revolutionists of the eighteenth century, seeking in every possible way to abolish our holy religion, were not ashamed to lead the people into the most disgraceful superstitions. They set up idols,

they offered incense, and prostrated themselves before gods of wood and stone. The trunk of a tree was the god *Mirabeau*. This trunk, hewn into a statue, as deformed as he whom it represented, was placed on a pedestal in a public square of the city of Brest. Its inauguration was celebrated by a public festival. The whole city turned out, the music of the *Marseillaise* resounded on all sides, and, at the appointed moment, all fell on their knees, following the example of the judges, the municipality, and the national guard.

Among that pagan horde, only one man remained standing; with indignation, he exclaimed: "Idolatry, ye cowards! idolatry!" His voice rose above the drums, trumpets and music. Furious at this, the base adorers threatened him, crying in their turn: "Kneel, or die!"

"Yes, death!" replied he; "I adore only the God of heaven and earth; I will not bend my knee to idols."

His friends gathered around him, they entreated, nay, even violently tried to throw him on his knees; sabres were raised over his head, but he remained standing. This man was not one of the common people; he was assistant justice of the peace. Behind him, at a window of his house, stood his wife; he looked at her, and though her voice could not be heard, by her looks and gestures she said, "Courage, *mon ami*, be worthy of your God!" Around her were her three children, whom she urged to pray for their father. The severe struggle continued, yet he

remained firm in his resistance. Finally, his friends became ashamed; they arose, struck down the uplifted swords, led him in safety to his home, and dispersed his furious enemies. His wife, embracing him, said: "You are worthy of me; bless now your children, and may God give them your constancy."

Here is another trait, which you will read with so much the more pleasure, as the heroine was a young person of your own age.

In the year 439, the cruel Genseric, king of the Vandals, pillaged Carthage, then the richest and most populous city in Africa. He massacred the greater number of the inhabitants, and sold, as slaves, those who escaped the swords of his soldiers. Among the latter was a young lady of distinguished family, named Julia. She was bought by Eusebius, a pagan merchant, who took her into Syria. This young girl, as wise and modest as she was beautiful, filled, in her master's house, all the duties imposed by her condition of servant, and did so with such great devotedness and fidelity, that Eusebius soon came to regard her as a treasure in his house. Sometimes he went so far as to say, that he would rather lose his whole fortune than suffer this slave to be taken from him. He knew that Julia was a Christian, but did not prevent her from exercising her religion; neither did she abuse her master's indulgence. It was only after she had accomplished all the duties of her position, that she retired to pray and read the holy books she had saved from the ruin of her family. She lived in peace with all in the house,

but such were her modesty and reserve, that she inspired all, even her master, with a sort of veneration for her, and no one dared to say in her presence anything that could afflict her.

Eusebius having occasion to make a journey into Gaul, took with him his favorite slave.

On reaching the northern part of Corsica, he learned that the islanders were celebrating a Pagan festival, and he cast anchor, in order to assist thereat. At the sight of the abominable superstition of their idolatrous worship, Julia could not refrain from testifying her horror, and she retired apart, to offer her prayers to God. Some of the people denounced her to Felix, governor of the island, who was a bitter enemy of the Christians; he demanded her of Eusebius, in order to compel her to render homage to the gods, and offer them sacrilegious incense. Eusebius refused, and as Felix, in order to overcome his resistance, offered him a considerable sum of money, he replied: "All the gold in the world could not repay me for the loss of this young girl."

The governor understanding that he could gain his point only by a stratagem, gave a great banquet, at which he made Eusebius drunk, and while in that condition, he obtained from him all that he desired.

Felix caused the young virgin to be brought before him, and reproached her with the contempt she showed for the worship of the gods.

"Your gods are only demons," replied Julia with a holy liberty; "I despise, I sovereignly detest them."

"Young girl," answered the governor, "your hardihood is great. Do you know that it is in my power either to deprive you of life, or set you at liberty? . . . . Sacrifice to our gods, and I will set you free.

"I am as free as I desire to be," replied the saint, "for as long as I serve Jesus Christ, I am truly free. The condition of slave, which I hold in the eyes of men, is not disagreeable to me, and is no obstacle to my true liberty, because it does not hinder me from rendering my homage and adoration to the only true God, or from consecrating my heart to Him. For the rest, you may deprive me of life in whatever manner you wish. I will lose it with joy, and I would rather die a thousand times than sacrifice to your idols."

Felix, understanding that he could not seduce the saint by his promises, caused her to be beaten and torn most cruelly. Finding her still invincible, he caused her to be crucified, and in this way, she rendered her beautiful soul to her Creator on the 23d of May, on which day the Church celebrates her feast.

It may, perhaps, seem to you, dear children, that St. Julia might have concealed her faith, on an occasion in which no one urged her to sacrifice to the demon, and in which her disapprobation of an impious worship exposed her to such imminent danger. But there are conjunctures in which one would seem to participate in a crime, did he not openly disavow it; such were the circumstances in which Julia found herself.

Besides, what would she have gained by concealing her faith? Alas! a few years of life, a few vain joys, a few pleasures of very short duration, in which, perhaps, her virtue might have suffered shipwreck! . . . . .

Meanwhile, that great saint was enjoying the reward of her fidelity to God. She had despised the vain promises of the world, the threats of a pagan judge; she had not been ashamed of Jesus Christ before men. Jesus Christ recognized her before His Heavenly Father as His faithful servant, and crowned her with eternal glory. What a blessed lot! It shall be yours, also, dear children, if you trample under foot all human respect.





## CHAPTER X

### *THE WORLD AND ITS SEDUCTIONS.*

What we understand by the world—It must be hated and despised—It is false and treacherous—Misfortune of those who allow themselves to be seduced by the world—Several instances—The maxims of the world are to be opposed by those of the Gospel.

**Y** children, you have often heard, that we must not love the world, that we must despise the world, that we must not think or act as the world does; but perhaps you do not understand what is that world, which is represented as your greatest enemy, and against whose seductions you have been warned from your very infancy.

The world, dear children, is, in the first place, the assemblage of those who do not love God, who violate His precepts, and seek, either directly or indirectly, to deter others from observing them.

Secondly, it is the reunion of persons, who, without openly professing contempt of God, are indifferent about Him, forget His commandments, and are content to live according to the exigencies of nature.

Thirdly, it is the circle of those who, knowing God, wish to serve him, but, at the same time, will do no violence to themselves; who lead a pleasant, easy, and agreeable life. These persons invent reasons, forge systems, and wish, at every cost, to unite

passion and religion, duty and pleasure, God and the devil.

You have not much to fear, dear children, from the first class of worldlings; you are too deeply penetrated with the holy truths of faith, for any one to induce you to violate, without fear or remorse, the commands of God.

The second, also, is likely to be suspected by you, for you justly place little confidence in people who render no homage to God, and pay little attention to His orders.

But the class which I have designated as the third, is not disagreeable to you. It is this that welcomed you at your entrance into society, and which gave you so many external evidences of friendship and kindness. It is composed of a considerable number of young ladies, of your age and position; of some married ladies, good enough in a way, but elegant, and rather frivolous; of young gentlemen, polite, attentive and respectful, who are, perhaps, your relations, and whose conduct is in no way reprehensible; and, finally, of certain other persons, who love you much, and seek your happiness, but whose affection, alas! exceeds the bounds of prudence and discernment, and who, while wishing to do you too much good, often do you much evil.

Now, my children, it is this world, in the midst of which you live, which you must not love, which you must deeply distrust.

What flattering eulogiums will it not lavish on you? what will it not say of your beauty, the grace-

fulness of your figure; the perfection and variety of your accomplishments! With what enthusiasm will it rank you above those, whom, in a short time, it will exalt far above yourselves! . . . . .

Being simple and artless, you will believe in the sincerity of those praises. This language, so new to you, will gradually arouse your self-love, and you will begin to believe yourselves really worthy of notice.

Ah, did you but know how prodigal the world is of its flatteries, how it lavishes them at the feet of all, and how it laughs at those whom this incense has seemed to please! You are entering society, you are about beginning this life in the world;—be watchful, be on your guard; it is the only means of avoiding the infatuation.

If the world, by means of its flatteries, succeeds in gaining entrance to your heart, you will soon begin to relish its antichristian maxims. It will tell you that your attention to prayer is too great a constraint at your age; that your avoidance of dangerous occasions is only a vain scruple; that the simplicity of your attire is a ridiculous excess of devotion; it will add, in tones most sweet, seductive, and persuasive, that God does not require so much of His creatures; that prudence calls for some relaxation, that too much devotion is injurious to the mind, and the health; that there is a just medium in all things;—it will so often repeat these sentiments, will adduce so many reasons to give weight to them, that you will, at last, be seduced by its artful speeches.

Then, the advice of your confessor will seem importunate, the counsels you received from your former teachers, when leaving the convent-school, too severe, and impossible to follow. You will find objections to everything that may remind you of your duty. You will want another kind of life, another system; in a word, you will desire the life of the world,—dress, festivity, pleasures, homage.

I do not wish to describe the life of folly and dissipation that will, then, unfortunately, become yours; I only wish to say, dear children, that you will no longer possess that peace of heart which constituted the happiness of your earlier years. You will think happiness to be within your grasp;—it will elude it, only to throw you into painful anxiety, bitter jealousy, and gnawing remorse. In your folly, you would wish to shine, and shine unrivalled; you would wish to win all homage, and the world, that ungrateful and perfidious world, to which you have sacrificed your peace, repose, and innocence, will be so cruel as to prefer to you other creatures, who, in their turn, shall be, like yourselves, only the idols of a day. . . . Alas! it will make no more account of you; or if it still remembers you, it will be to laugh at your pretensions, and enjoy your discomfiture. You have been pleased with its incense; you have desired it as your sovereign happiness, and flattered yourself that you would enjoy it for a long time; look now, that perfidious world casts you down in the mire, it gives you only shame!

Such is the fatal *dénouement* of the worldly life.

Let the theatre of it be more or less great, more or less charming, let it be in the city or country—this life is invariably terminated in the same manner. The victims are to be pitied, it is true; but are they not often the primary cause of their misfortune? Why did they not believe prudent and experienced persons, who told them to distrust and to fear? Why did they abandon prayer, and salutary meditation on the truths of faith? Could they have been ignorant that their weakness was great; and, that, without succor from on high, they could not but yield and perish?

A few years ago, a young lady, endowed, to her misfortune, with most brilliant qualities, had, like so many others, the fatal experience of the falsity and malice of the world which had, at first, offered incense at the shrine of her vanity. She had but just finished her education, and returned radiant to the bosom of her family. At first, never had young lady been more sought after, or praised in the circles and parties of pleasure, of which she was the ornament and the delight.

Her parents, confiding in her judgment and good sense, which were above the ordinary standard, allowed her too much freedom, and her head became turned, as usually happens to the proud. An imprudence compromised her reputation, and she became the talk of the town where she dwelt. The position of her family, and the brilliant education she had received, would have permitted her to aspire to a rich and noble alliance, but young men look very

closely, when there is serious question of choosing a companion for life. The parents of the young lady found themselves constrained, in order to reëstablish her reputation somewhat, to marry her to him who had helped to compromise her. But this man neither loved nor respected her. During six years she had to suffer, at his hands, the most shameful humiliations. He showed only contempt for her, and often ill-treated her, even in public. She bore all in silence, and durst not complain, for everybody said: "She is treated as she deserves." Such, dear children, is the pity the world gives its victims.

Happily, she remembered in her misfortunes, that religion has consolation for every disgrace. She sought in piety the remedy for her sorrows, and God granted her the grace to endure them with patience. After six years of cruel martyrdom, her husband became more tractable, and she enjoyed some repose during two or three years. But her husband then becoming insane, his wife had, on this account, to endure most terrible trials. She sustained them with admirable courage, and neglected nothing that could conduce to her husband's health. People then rendered justice to her virtue, but the errors of her youth were never forgotten, and some still said: "She suffers what she has well deserved."

There is nothing better to be expected from the world, dear children; the more diligently you try to please it, the more it will laugh at and blame your most trifling weaknesses. If you fly from it only after you have had experience of its malice, it will be

too late; it will pursue and destroy you to the end, and, after the lapse of many years, it will still speak of your faults. The surest way is not to become too familiar with it; to remain at home, simple, artless, pious, and usefully occupied; this is the surest way to preserve your virtue, and acquire its esteem.

Say not, that you wish only to see a little of the world, and then to return to a modest retirement; that curiosity would cost you dear. Your mind would be, at first, fascinated, and your heart ensnared; besides, the descent to vice is so rapid, that one cannot stop on it when he wills; the first step once made, others necessarily follow, until one finally falls into the abyss.

A young lady belonging to one of the first families of the capital, came near falling, a few years ago, into this fatal gulf; a few days sufficed to lead her so far, that, had it not been for the special interposition of Providence, she would have been irretrievably lost.

After a brilliant education, she returned to her father's house, adorned with all the charms of beauty, all the loveliness of youth. A magnificent ball was given especially in her honor, for her parents were most anxious to have her brought out, and she herself desired to make her appearance in society with all possible brilliancy.

For several days she had occupied herself solely with her dress, and nothing was spared to render it perfect. In her self-love, she said: "I shall eclipse all my friends; all homage and attention shall be mine."

But, by one of those fatalities which can be explained only by regarding them as a manifest design of Providence, scarcely any attention was paid to the vain girl; no compliments were expressed save those required by politeness, and it even seemed to her, that an ironical smile was on the lips of those whose admiration she most ardently desired to win. The ball, nevertheless, was given in her honor, nothing was wanting to render her appearance really remarkable; beauty, grace, amiability, advantageous figure, distinguished appearance, magnificent attire! . . . . You may judge of her vexation! . . . . She was one of those characters susceptible of deep impressions, but knowing how to conceal them. She concentrated her feelings within herself, and secretly gave herself up to the despair of a heart cruelly wounded. The devil, profiting by her unhappy dispositions, inspired her with a frightful resolution. . . . Leaving her father's mansion one evening, she, with hurried steps, passed through the capital, and hastening to the suburbs, threw herself into a pond. Her garments, inflated by the wind, buoyed her up for some moments on the surface of the water; in trying to overcome this obstacle, she made some noise. A priest, who was carrying the Holy Viaticum to a sick person, heard her, and, with the aid of the sacristan who accompanied him, saved her life. They carried her to the nearest house, where every attention was lavished on her; they questioned her, but she refused to make herself known. Every day the charitable priest came to

see her, and to exhort her to the best of his power. Vanquished, at last, by the touching kindness of that minister of God, she told him her father's name, and what had led her to seek her own death. The clergyman encouraged, enlightened and consoled her; finally, he restored her to her father, who had sought her in vain. The young lady, so providentially saved, has since consecrated herself to God in a religious community.

Anne de Melun, daughter of William, Prince of Epinoy, had received from nature a noble and graceful carriage, an agreeable countenance, a lively and penetrating intellect, but the Lord was pleased to adorn her soul with still more precious gifts. She increased in virtue, but, alas! in the morn of life, virtue is but a rose, which the least breath may tarnish or blight. When Anne had attained that age in which the passions exercise their empire over the soul, she allowed herself to be seduced by the allurements of pleasure. Soon the frivolous and guilty amusements of the world became her most serious occupation. She so passionately loved agreeable odors, that she could not endure anything that was not perfumed. A lady having told her that her complexion was a little too red, and advised her to rub her face with a certain liquid, and afterwards to expose it for some time to the heat of the fire, she was so foolish as to try the experiment. That same evening, while she was at a ball, a deadly pallor succeeded the deep red of her complexion; she fainted, and this happy accident was one of the causes of her

salvation. She entered into serious reflection, and thanked God for not having summoned her to judgment on that fatal occasion. The terrifying death of a relation finished what reflection had begun. One of her cousins, a young man intoxicated with the follies of the world, was stricken with a terrible malady. During the last three days of his life, the unfortunate man struggled against death in a dreadful manner. He uttered lamentable cries, testified a profound terror of the judgments of God, and worked in most frightful convulsions. Mlle. de Melun, who went to visit him, began to think seriously of leading a more Christian life. In effect, she began to live like an angel, to occupy herself only about her duties, and avoid the world with as much ardor as she had formerly sought after it.

Believe me, dear children, or rather, believe the saints, who incessantly recommend us to abhor the world and its false maxims; believe, above all, Jesus Christ, the Truth itself, who has cursed the world as the enemy of His glory and of the souls He came to redeem. Love not the world; beware of its delusions; it is the most cunning of enchanters, the most skilful of magicians. Attach yourselves strongly to the maxims of faith; meditate on the great truths of religion, death, judgment, a happy or miserable eternity, the shortness of time, etc. Oppose to the false prudence of the age, which thinks only of the present, that Christian prudence, which takes precautions for the future. When you hear it said of the votaries of the world: "Happy are the rich!" remem-

ber that our Lord says, *It is very difficult for them to work out their salvation.* When they seek to persuade you that youth is the time for pleasure and enjoyment, answer, that the Sovereign Truth has said: *If you do not perform penance, you shall all perish.* When they wish to turn you from prayer and exercises of piety, remember our Lord's recommendation: *Pray without ceasing; watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.* When they proclaim aloud the happiness of those who find the realization of their ambitious dreams, say with the Saviour: *What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?* In fine, when they pity those who suffer, when they despise the poor and humble, remember that the Eternal Truth has declared them *blessed*, because they are in the way that leads to sovereign happiness, and that they are so much the more assured of attaining it, since they have so many points of resemblance to Him who voluntarily became poor and despised, to be the Model and Consoler of all men.





## CHAPTER XI.

### *MODESTY.*

Modesty is a young lady's most beautiful ornament, and is infinitely pleasing to God—St. Agnes, virgin and martyr—Everything in a young girl should breathe of purity and modesty—This virtue prepares her for the accomplishment of God's designs over her, and brings the blessing of Heaven on families—Saint Mary d'Oignies—Saint Hedwige—St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

IN treating of the different subjects I have, hitherto, brought under your notice, dear children, I have spoken of nearly all the virtues suitable to your age: love of God, above all things, tender piety, horror of sin, obedience to parents, charity to one's neighbor, cordiality towards all persons, compassion for the unfortunate, evenness of temper, love of labor, humility, simplicity, diffidence in one's self, courage, patience under contradictions, Christian prudence;—all have been recommended you in turn, as we ran over the circle of your duties and requirements. I have, also, frequently insisted on the necessity of flying from the world, its pleasures, its vain adornments, which are such very great obstacles to the virtues of your age and sex, and enemies to the innocence and purity of your souls. I wish now, my children, to speak more particularly

of that beautiful purity, which is the glory of your sex, not only in the eyes of God and His holy angels, but also in the eyes of the world, corrupt as it is.

Of all virtues, my children, it is this which our Lord loves most. He chose for His Mother the purest of virgins, for His foster-father, St. Joseph, also a virgin; He caused His divine mission to be announced by St. John the Baptist, and He testified a particular affection for St. John the Apostle, because both were virgins. He calls the pure of heart *blessed*, and promises heaven to them; He revealed to His Beloved Disciple, that virgins shall continually accompany Him in the glory of His kingdom.

Our Lord's marked predilection for virgins, should engage you, dear children, to preserve, as most precious, the beautiful virtue of modesty. It is justly regarded as a sign of predestination; and, it may be said, that it is an ornament which extremely heightens all that is beautiful and good in a young lady. It is a celestial flower which God has planted in the heart of the young girl, which she should cultivate assiduously; it is a pure and delicate sentiment, which cannot be defined, but which is deeply felt by souls that prize it, and are jealous for its preservation.

After the sublime example of modesty and purity which we find in the august Mother of God, who is, at once, the Queen and the Protectress of virgins, we cannot present to young persons a more beautiful model of angelic virtue than St. Agnes, virgin and martyr. "All the inhabitants of the earth unite

in her praises," says St. Jerome, and the Church, in the Canon of the Mass, makes mention of her at the holy altar.

This saint united in her person every gift that could render her attractive in the eyes of the world; but her soul was adorned with qualities, more precious far than high birth, or natural endowments. Ere she had attained the age of twelve years, she, burning with divine love, had consecrated herself to God by the vow of virginity. Vividly enlightened by the light of faith, and prevented by the benedictions of heaven, she early understood how vain is earthly glory. Prayer and solitude were her delight, and she carefully avoided every occasion in which she might draw on herself the praise and flattery of a world which she despised.

But the rank of her family sometimes obliged her, contrary to her inclinations, to appear in public. Several young Roman noblemen, dazzled by her charms, sued for her hand. One of them even offered her costly presents, that he might obtain the preference. To all solicitations, she replied, that she desired no earthly happiness, save that of remaining pure in the eyes of the immortal Spouse she had chosen; and that this happiness was infinitely preferable to the honors, riches, and pleasures they promised her, nay, even dearer than life itself.

Then, those men, who, in the hope of seducing her, had made so many protestations of love, seeing that they could not rob her heart of the precious flower of virginity, denounced her to the Prefect of

Rome as a Christian. The latter, having caused the youthful virgin to be arrested, endeavored by the most magnificent promises to engage her to unite her destiny with that of one of the young Romans who sought her alliance.

"My lord," replied Agnes, with firmness, "how can I accept a mortal spouse—I, who am consecrated to the immortal God, whom I adore? I have sworn inviolable fidelity to Him, and I will, at every cost, preserve my heart and body always pure; nothing shall ever make me change my resolution."

"You are deceived, my child," said the prefect, with feigned gentleness, "the superstitions of the Christians have turned your head; return to a safer and more sensible way of thinking. Abandon that imaginary spouse of whom you speak; adore our gods, who, by their example, invite to a delicious enjoyment of life, and accept, under their auspices, a spouse who will render you happy throughout a long career."

"My lord," replied Agnes, "I aspire to a more true and constant happiness than that of which you speak. In consecrating my heart and my whole being to the God whom I adore, I prepare for myself an eternal felicity; but were I to do what you desire, I should stain my soul, and draw on myself an eternal chastisement. I am not deceived, my lord; He who teaches these truths, is God, whom alone I adore and love. I would rather die than offer incense to your senseless idols."

Wishing to terrify the young girl by the sight of

tortures, the prefect caused a large fire to be kindled near her; he displayed before her, iron hooks, racks, and all the instruments of torture which were used in the punishment of malefactors and Christians. Far from being terrified, Agnes regarded them with a smile. Then they led her before the idols, to offer incense to them, but she raised her hand only to make the sign of the cross.

Seeing how vain were his efforts, the prefect exclaimed: "Obstinate girl, unworthy of the illustrious family to which you belong, since the torments destined for slaves cannot force you to submission, I shall employ another means, which will be more successful."

We will not relate the trials to which the youthful martyr was then subjected; suffice it to say, with Cardinal Wiseman in his beautiful work, *Tabiola*, "that her angel-guardian protected her against every danger, and the purity of her presence changed into a glorious sanctuary, the place to which the iniquitous judge had caused her to be taken."

Being informed of what had happened in that infamous spot, the pagan priests attributed Agnes's deliverance to the power of magic art, and urged the prefect to condemn her to be burned alive. They lighted the pile, but the flames rising on each side of her seemed to respect the martyr, who, like the Hebrew children in the furnace, sang the glory and power of the Lord. Finally, they ordered the executioner to behead the young victim on her pile. The executioner tremblingly drew near her. "Has-

ten," cried Agnes, "come and assure my eternal happiness. O, how I delight to behold your cruel and sanguinary appearance! You indeed possess the secret of being more agreeable to me than all the vile flatterers who laid snares for my innocence. Fear not to inflict the stroke of death, for to me it will be the beginning of eternal life." Then raising her eyes to heaven, she exclaimed: "Receive, O Lord, a soul which thou dost so greatly love, and which has cost thee so dear."

The executioner immolated the innocent victim, and thus opened for her the abode of eternal felicity. She was but thirteen years old. The feast of this illustrious virgin is celebrated on the 21st of January.

Behold, my children, what value Saint Agnes attached to this most beautiful of virtues, and with what courage she exposed herself to death for its preservation. What do you do to retain this precious jewel? What precautions do you take to prevent its being ravished from you?

Modesty, my children, reveals herself in all things; nothing is indifferent to her: the dress of a young maiden should be rigorously subjected to her influence; her words, her looks should breathe her perfume; her life should utter only the purest expressions; her voice should sing only the delights of heaven and those sentiments approved by God Himself; her demeanor, her manners should always be so mild, so gentle, that people may find therein the reflection of the purity of her soul.

The modest young girl desires not to be seen;

she dreads the notice of the world, and fears its homage. In the bosom of her family, as well as in the midst of the most brilliant assembly, she is ever the same, humble, simple, and pure; for her conduct is, everywhere, the reflection of her thoughts, her desires, her habits.

The modest young girl dreads the very shadow of the contrary vice. Like the holy Virgin, her Model, she is troubled at the sight of those who praise the gifts bestowed on her by Heaven. The desire of pleasing men, of shining in society,—that evil so dangerous, which turns the heads of so many giddy girls,—has no share in her thoughts; she seeks purely and simply to please God and her parents; to this does she confine her pretensions.

You will, perhaps, say, dear children, that such rules of conduct may do very well for those who wish to enter the cloister, but if one has a different vocation, must not one desire to appear in society and render one's self pleasing to others? Alas, dear children, how many young persons have been lost, through this fatal error! You desire to win a position, to contract a suitable alliance;—think you, you will succeed the better in this, will win more respect, by making yourselves conspicuous, by seeking the attentions of many, in a word, by exposing your virtue to the dangers of seduction?

It is true, that, the greater number of you are not called by God to the life of the cloister, but are not all of you called to the Christian life? should not you serve God as perfectly as possible in a state, inferior, it is true, to that of religious, but yet a holy

state? Now, dear children, what better or more suitable dispositions can you bring thereto, than that of having preserved yourselves as pure and modest as angels? What benedictions will God then shower upon you! what graces will He grant, to sustain you amidst the trials and difficulties of the vocation He has assigned you! The most holy Virgin, whose modesty and purity you shall have so faithfully imitated, will delight to regard you ever as her beloved children; she will be the protectress of your children; and, should a premature death—which happens, alas, but too frequently—render orphaned those dear children, this sweet and compassionate Sovereign, who is at once the Queen of Virgins and the Mother of Jesus, will, from her heavenly throne, watch over the innocent creatures who no longer have an earthly mother!

Saint Mary d'Oignies, who served God so perfectly in the married state, was, in her youth, possessed of remarkable piety and modesty. She rose frequently in the night to pray, in order to conceal her fervor from her parents, who, wealthy, and passionately fond of the world, regarded with no favorable eye the simple and retired life led by their daughter. They would have wished to see her fond of dress and ornaments. They rallied her when she refused rich apparel, saying: "What kind of a girl is this daughter of ours?" In the hope of lessening her inclination to piety, they gave her in marriage at the age of fourteen. Far from abating her fervor in her new position, Mary even induced her husband to lead a life as perfect as her own. This holy

woman has, for several centuries, been venerated in the Church. What would have become of her amid the scandals of the world, had not she begun in her youth to serve God? had she not, by exact modesty and love of prayer, prepared herself for the state to which God called her?

Saint Hedwige, Duchess of Poland and Silesia, also caused herself to be greatly admired in her youth by her love of holy modesty. Confided in her childhood to the care of holy religious, she profited so well by their instructions and example that she lived as a perfect Christian, in a position in which many think only of feasting and pleasure. She brought up her children in the fear of God, inspired her husband with sublime sentiments of religion, and was the mother of the poor and the orphan. Having become a widow, she retired into a community governed by one of her daughters, and showed herself the most humble and docile of the religious. Such was the fruit of the modesty and piety of her early years. Had she been as vain, giddy, and dissipated as others, should she have drawn upon herself and her children such heavenly blessings? . . . .

What might I not add of the virtues of St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland, of St. Clotilda, Queen of France, and of the heroic St. Elizabeth, Duchess of Thuringia? These great princesses, in their youth, which was spent amid the festivities of a court, gave examples of all virtues, but particularly of holy modesty. For its preservation, they practised mortifications which would terrify the young ladies of our day, and took all the time they could from the

idle diversions of the world, to consecrate it to prayer. St. Elizabeth was accustomed, while young, to remove from her head, as she entered the church, the rich crown she was required to wear. Being questioned as to her motive for doing so, she replied: "How could I wear on my head a crown of gold or diamonds, when I appear before my Lord Jesus Christ, who was crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross for love of me?"

How beautiful are those sentiments! Have you such, dear children, when you are entering the holy place? Do not you, on the contrary, dress yourselves so as to be seen and remarked? . . . . Ah! this is not wisdom and piety; it is not thus one should prepare to enter on a career full of danger; it is not thus that one draws on herself the blessing of God? . . . .

Believe me, dear children, fortune, beauty, talents, all that seems so flattering, is incapable of assuring the happiness of a family; such things can, at best, only attract men without prudence or reflection; but sensible men look for solid gifts; and God, above all, whose providence is to regulate your future, proportions His graces and favors to real merit. Be truly pious and prudent, cultivate in your hearts the beautiful lily of modesty, preserve it in all its whiteness; thus will you, like the holy Virgin, draw on yourselves the complaisant regards of the Lord, while, at the same time, you will merit the esteem of those around you, and those into whose society you may be thrown.



## CHAPTER XII.

### *MEANS FOR PRESERVING THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF VIRTUES.*

Prayer—Custody of the senses—Mortification—Retirement—Guard over the heart—Great devotion to the Blessed Virgin—Instances of Mary's protection—Frequentation of the sacraments.

THE first of these means, dear children, is prayer, and holy reflection on the truths of faith. As I have already frequently recommended this to you, I shall only add here, that, on account of your extreme weakness, and the numerous occasions to which you may be exposed, it will be impossible to preserve your modesty intact without prayer. The demon is, moreover, so jealous of the purity of your soul, that he will allow no day to pass without spreading snares for you; know, then, dear children, that, on the day on which you omit prayer, some impure blast, vomited by Satan, will begin to tarnish the beautiful lily of your innocence. This divine flower needs to be daily refreshed by heavenly dew; and how shall you receive this sweet dew, if not by prayer.

Place a guard over your senses, mortify them, lest they draw you into evil. Never let your eyes rest

on a dangerous object; never let your ears be voluntarily open to flattery, praise, to light or dangerous discourse; let all your words breathe the delightful perfume of modesty. Never say anything you would blush to repeat before your mothers, your confessors, before God Himself, who will, one day, judge you; never sing anything which might be calculated, in the slightest degree, to arouse evil passions. Watch over your demeanor; whether alone or in company, never allow yourselves to assume effeminate or improper attitudes; be careful in this respect, even in bed, for God sees you everywhere, and the demon never loses sight of you.

Do not flatter your body, which is your greatest enemy, and that which you should most dread; give it, as regards sleep, clothing, and nourishment, only what is necessary; for vain ornaments, too much sleep, niceness and excess in eating and drinking, are incompatible with this delicate virtue, and are a preparation for sad falls.

Be constantly occupied; do not listen to natural delicacy; learn, on the contrary, to do violence to it, to impose privations on yourselves, to mortify yourselves voluntarily, on a thousand occasions, in which you might innocently gratify yourselves; in order that you may be courageous, when there is question of avoiding sin. Without this continual mortification of the senses, it is impossible to preserve modesty in all its splendor.

Love to remain at home with your parents. Go into society as little as possible. The young person

who wishes to see everything, and to be seen by everybody, is beginning to falter in the path of virtue. In proportion as she frequents the world, an impure dust will penetrate into her heart, and tarnish the delicate flower of modesty which God has planted therein, that it may be cultivated in solitude and watered by the dew of grace. Remain at home then, dear children; remain there like the holy Virgin at Nazareth, occupied in labor and prayer; and if your parents' position obliges them to receive much company, remain in your own apartment, except when propriety or necessity calls for your presence.

Watch carefully over your own heart; disengage it from inordinate affections. Love your parents, your brothers and sisters, and pious friends, in the manner dictated by a good and sensible heart; but preserve for God all that is deeper, more intimate, more passionate, if I may use the expression, in your heart; who could ever be as worthy of your love as He? . . .

Have a tender and affectionate devotion to the most holy Virgin; honor in particular her Immaculate Conception. Recite every night before you go to bed, the *Ave Maria* three times, with the special intention of obtaining the grace of preserving the beautiful virtue of modesty. St. Ligouri strongly advises this practice to young girls, and assures them that it is most efficacious for removing dangerous temptations.

But, above all things, dear children, imitate the

virtues of Mary. God, who has given her as your Mother, wishes her to be, also, your model. I shall place before your eyes the portrait drawn by St. Ambrose, of the virtues of this august Queen, whom you love, whom you will love, I hope, throughout your whole life. Happy are they who try to reproduce in their conduct a model so perfect!

"Come," says this holy doctor, "and place before your eyes the life and virginity of Mary; it will be as a mirror in which you shall behold the model of chastity and virtue.

"Mary was a virgin in body and mind, and of a purity incapable of any deceit or disguise.

"She was humble of heart, grave in words, wise in her resolutions.

"She spoke seldom, and then said only what was necessary.

"She read assiduously the books of the law of God, and placed her confidence, not in perishable riches, but in the prayers of the poor.

"Being always employed with fervor, she desired God to be the only witness of what passed within her heart; to Him she referred herself and all that she possessed.

"She injured no one, was beneficent to all; honored her superiors, and envied not her equals.

"She shunned vainglory, followed reason, and ardently loved virtue.

"Her looks were sweet, her discourse mild; her whole conduct bore the imprint of modesty.

"Her actions had nothing unbecoming, her gait

nothing of levity, her voice nothing of overbearing assurance.

"Her exterior was so well regulated, that in her body was seen the picture of her mind, and an accomplished model of all virtues.

"Her charity for her neighbor knew no bounds.

"She fasted often, and the most ordinary meats were her choice, not to please the taste, but to support nature.

"She frequently gave to pious exercises the moments destined for sleep.

"It was not her custom to go abroad, except to the temple, and then in company with her relations."

Dear children, sometimes make your meditation on this magnificent portrait of the virtues of your august Mother, and examine, if in your conduct there be any resemblance to hers. . . . You will often find therein, many things wholly opposed to it, but let not this discourage you; resolve to do better, and persist in your efforts, despite all obstacles. Even though you do not always succeed, this persistence will, at least, be a recommendation in your favor before the most holy Virgin. The following is a very remarkable example:

A young girl, exposed to great dangers in her own home, received, a few years ago, the fruits of her perseverance in honoring Mary. The poor child, incessantly solicited to evil, wept, sighed and prayed; she knew not how to withdraw herself from occasions in which she had already fallen several times. After many novenas, alms, and practices of mortifica-

tion, she obtained permission from her parents, under some pretext, to enter in quality of pensioner, in a religious community, although she was nearly eighteen years old.

This first grace obtained of the most holy Virgin, she fervently implored that of being able to make a candid avowal of her faults in the holy tribunal. So great was her repugnance to this, that it seemed to her she could not make the humiliating confession without its resulting in her death. Finally, the holy Virgin took pity on this soul that had always honored her. She obtained her the grace to reveal to her spiritual physician the hideous and impure wound that had so long stained her soul, and thus to recover that peace and joy to which she had so long been a stranger.

The following is another instance of the protection of the Queen of virgins, which will prove to you still more, how advantageous it is to honor her.

When Charles VIII. had given up to pillage a city in Italy, a young lady of distinguished family cast herself at the king's feet, exclaiming: "Mercy, sire, mercy; save me from the insults of your soldiers!" The prince's generosity preserved her for the moment, but the poor child speedily learned that she had escaped from one danger, only to fall into a greater. Happily, she was a faithful servant of the Blessed Virgin. Seeing an image of the Immaculate Queen in the king's apartment, she cast herself on her knees, and with eyes bathed in tears, and stretching forth her arms towards her from whom she

expected help, she cried out: "Sire, for love of the Virgin of virgins, who has given us a Saviour, spare me!"

The remembrance of Mary, the sight of her image extinguished the impure flame that burned in the heart of the young prince; he suddenly changed, praised the girl's firmness, and gave her a considerable sum, to repair the disasters the war had brought on her family.

Dear children, when the demon, under a thousand impure aspects, seeks to sully your imagination, do you, also, fix your eyes on Mary's image, pronounce her sweet and powerful name; you will find those fatal illusions vanish, and will keep your heart free from stain.

Discover, also, to your confessor, with simplicity, the temptations to which you are subjected in regard to purity, and follow his advice. In this kind of combat, it will be most useful for you to approach the Holy Table frequently. The heavenly bread you there receive, is the bread that strengthens and sanctifies; it is the God of all sanctity and all purity; it is the sacred antidote against all the infirmities of our souls; it encloses all the treasures of grace and sanctification. Go, then, often to this magnificent banquet, in which our Lord testifies such ardent love; approach it with due preparation, with an ardent desire of gathering its precious fruits this, dear children, you may be assured, is the most efficacious means of preserving and increasing the innocence and purity of your hearts.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### ADVERSITY.

Trials come at every age—They happen by God's permission—They are conducive to our salvation—How adversity is to be borne—Example—Loss of health—Reverses of fortune—Family misunderstandings.

SOME of you, dear children, may, perhaps, be surprised that I should speak of *adversity* in a book destined for the young, to whom everything seems full of hope and joy. And nevertheless, there is, alas! nothing more common in the world than sorrow. A long and painful experience has taught me, that youth itself is not free from the strokes of misfortune. Among the beloved children whom I formerly beheld around me, smiling at life as a beautiful dream, how many have I seen go forth from the shelter of their youth to enter, almost immediately, upon their days of mourning and desolation! Do I not owe to those stricken young hearts a word of advice and consolation? Again, dear children, how little is required to change everything, even in the most fortunate position! The promises which the future makes, are so deceptive! And you, who are, to-day, so happy and joy-

ous, who has promised you, that when, on the morrow, you take up this book, your hand and your heart, under the influence of bitter grief, will not turn to these pages written on *adversity*? I shall, then, give here some advice for the days of sorrow and deception already hanging over some of you, which, sooner or later, will fall upon the greater number, whatever may be their present security.

Allow me, first, to remind you, my children, that God is the master of our destiny, and that it is always wrong to murmur against His holy will. Do not forget that He has merciful designs upon each one of us, and that He sends us joy or sorrow, health or sickness, riches or poverty, only as means of advancing our salvation, in conformity with those designs of His providence.

Now, my children, faith teaches us that though all these are equally gifts of God, nevertheless, some are much more conducive to our salvation than others; they are those, which, detaching our hearts from created things, oblige them to seek in God their peace and repose; those which render us more like to our Lord, and estrange us from earthly things. You will understand that I speak now of poverty, sufferings, and contradictions. Ah! dear children, if these fall to your lot, if our Heavenly Father, to insure more efficaciously your eternal felicity, makes you partakers of the chalice of His beloved Son, should you complain and esteem yourselves unhappy? That pagan girls might have such ideas, may well be believed, but young Christians,

instructed in the mysteries of faith, should not allow them to penetrate their mind and heart.

I know, my children, that our nature, corrupted by sin, is unwilling to submit to anything that contradicts it, and that our intellect, become very limited through the same cause, finds it difficult to comprehend the austere truths of faith; but I know, also, grace is all-powerful, and can operate miracles, even in the weakest creatures:—witness so many virgins who, deprived of everything, confined in infected dungeons, and fastened to instruments of torture, superabounded in joy, and blessed the Lord for having given them so great a share in His cross. Witness, also, a young lady, well-known to me, who was recently visited with an affliction, which would terrify you, were I to describe it to you. To the Directress of the convent-school, at which she had been educated, she wrote the following admirable words:

“What shall I say to you, dear sister, of my thoughts amidst the terrible afflictions which have befallen me? . . . . I do not wish to conceal them from you, because I know they will cause you joy. The good God has given me the grace of blessing and thanking Him for all that He has taken from me; consolation, fortune, hope. I have no longer any one to lean on, save Himself, and I acknowledge that He has treated me with great mercy. I should, most probably, have been lost, in the happy position in which I was; I was beginning to love the world, I felt my fervor diminishing.” . . .

This young girl had, like yourselves, formerly

indulged in beautiful dreams of happiness; but her piety and lively faith inspired her with that admirable resignation expressed in the above words.

O, dear children, what a glorious thing is faith! What an inestimable gift is solid piety!

But, I desire, for your consolation, to enter into some details regarding the manner in which you should comport yourselves, when certain heavy afflictions fall upon you in the bloom of youth, and cover you with the veil of mourning. . . .

Some have to deplore the premature loss of health. Young girls whom we have beheld around us, blooming with the freshness of youth, playful, merry and free from care, in the days of their childhood, are now pale and languid; disease is slowly undermining their constitution; it oppresses them with weariness, weighs down their spirits with anxiety, and clothes everything with the sombre hues of death! . . . . Poor young girls, how much you are to be pitied, if faith and piety come not to soothe your sufferings, and sweeten them by the resignation they inspire, and by thoughts of the merit you may acquire in your condition! Beware, then, lest you lose this merit by murmuring and impatience; abandon yourselves into the hands of God; unite your sufferings to those of our Lord on the cross; dwell on the hope of the eternal happiness you expect, and disengage your hearts from all things perishable. It is to aid you in doing this, that the Lord has sent you those pains which are cruel only to nature. Imitate Saint Ludwila, who prostrate

for thirty-six years, on a bed of pain, uttered no complaint, although poverty obliged her to submit to many privations; thus she acquired a rich crown of eternal glory.

Other young girls, who have deluded themselves with delightful images of a future, spent in ease and affluence, behold their family lose, in a moment, the fortune of which they were so proud. All that could flatter their vanity is engulphed in that abyss, which, in our days, is so often opened for the improvident, and there remains to them nothing but the disdainful glances of the public, perhaps, even its contempt. The former friends of the family become forgetful or indifferent; "they have flown with prosperity," as the poet says; their enemies sometimes even display a malignant joy. More charitable persons pity, it is true, those whom fickle Fortune has abandoned, but this slight consolation hinders not the approach of misery with its long train of privations.

Read, dear children, the following account of a young girl, stripped of all earthly goods, in the bloom of early life; she presents an example to be copied, should Providence ever subject you to the like trial.

This young person belonged to an honorable family. Placed, at the age of ten years, at a boarding-school conducted by religious, she had till then known only the caresses of fond parents, and all the luxuries and pleasures that wealth could bestow. Her giddy disposition, her lively, petulant temper, exercised, more than once, the patience of her mis-

tresses; and although those faults were redeemed by an excellent heart and rare intelligence, the good religious were, nevertheless, somewhat anxious about the future of a pupil, who had a decided dislike for even the least constraint, who gave scarcely any evidence of piety. Their zeal, however, never wearied; and they spared the child neither corrections, reproofs, nor exhortations..

Scarcely had she attained her fourteenth year, when a deplorable event stripped her parents of their fortune. She was then compelled to leave school, and return to them, no longer to enjoy the delights of opulence, but to assume the burden of care, of painful and humiliating labors. Their servants had been all dismissed. Her father, overpowered by the loss of his fortune, lay ill; serious fears were entertained of his life, and his wife, a lady of eminent piety, was in very delicate health. She was resigned, it is true; nevertheless, grief increased her ill-health.

In that hour of trial, so severe for a young child, there was wrought in her a transformation so marvellous, so surprising, that those who beheld it could not refrain from expressing their astonishment. She became, almost immediately, pious, sensible and sedate. She waited on her father with admirable assiduity, and, from the depths of her heart, drew such sweet and consoling words for her mother, that the latter wept with emotion.

But resources were wanting; in the meantime strengthening food was needed for the sick man, the mother was not able to support certain privations;

there were three young children to be supported and sent to school. Our young girl, overcoming her repugnance to labor, took in embroidery, at which she employed all her leisure moments, and even part of her nights. With the money earned by such assiduous and painful labor, she kept her parents free from the miseries of extreme poverty.

For at least fifteen years did she exercise this admirable self-devotedness in behalf of her family.

Her father is still prostrate on his bed of pain, which, most probably, he will leave only for the tomb; her mother is growing old, and I know of many other afflictions that have been added to the first. To this heroic young girl have frequently been offered more advantageous positions, in which she could utilize the knowledge acquired at school, and provide resources for the future, but she has always refused. "I have received this cross from the hands of God," said she, "I will not cast it away until He Himself remove it from me." From these words you may comprehend, dear children, how deep and solid is the piety that fills this estimable girl's heart. From time to time she comes to find consolation from God, in the holy house which formerly beheld her so giddy and careless; there she pours out her heart to her kind teachers, receives their advice and encouragement; then she returns, not without regretting the peace of our Lord's house, to that family of which she is the angel and the stay.

To this touching example I add no reflection, dear children. May you be capable of the same heroism,

the same resignation to the good pleasure of God, should He send you a similar trial.

There is another sorrow to which some of you may, perhaps, be subjected, and of which I must not omit to speak. Instead of those family joys which flow from that sweet liberty which each member enjoys and none abuses, and especially from that precious union which truly constitutes the charm of life,—many have, perhaps, found at the paternal hearth, only discord, misunderstanding, complete aversion among beings so very dear! . . . . Poor young girls! accustomed to see in the house of God only charity, kindness, sweet friendship, friendly and thoughtful attentions between your teachers and your companions, what has been your surprise, your grief, your disappointment, at finding nothing of the kind at home! What a mournful picture is, sometimes, presented to your eyes in your own family, in which you had expected to find only joy, love, and peace! I abstain from reproducing the details of this picture, for it saddens my heart, and fills my eyes with tears. Dear child, whoever you be that find yourself in such a cruel position, be an angel of peace amidst those waves of bitterness; raise your heart to the God of goodness and charity; ask Him to put loving words into your mouth, words stamped with the seal of prudence and wisdom, to soothe and to heal, if it be possible, wounds, alas, but too cruel! Pray, supplicate our Lord incessantly to give to your family that peace born of His love and the practice of religious duties; for the neglect, the omission of

those duties, is, undoubtedly, the fatal source of the evil that is breaking your heart.

Again, dear child, I give you an advice which will be useful to you in your position. Never say anything that might excite the least bitterness in the hearts of your parents; never make the least remark that might increase their misunderstanding; do not give to one in the presence of the other more multiplied or more tender marks of affection, lest you excite some feeling, and be, however innocently, a subject of jealousy. If one of them be evidently in the wrong, do not constitute yourself as judge; pretend not to notice it, and do not bring it up again, unless you are sure of being listened to. Be on your guard not to let anything unpleasant that happens in your family be known abroad; keep inviolably secret those deplorable and unfortunate scenes, alas! but too common, where religion does not hold the first rank in the domestic circle. If you need advice, ask it of the guide of your soul, or of some other person on whose prudence you can rely; and, even in this case, shield, as much as you can, those to whom you owe so much respect, honor and love.

I must now cease to speak on this subject, dear children, for I have far exceeded the limits I had prescribed myself. I might say much more, but the grace of our Lord will supply whatever is wanting. It will open your hearts and intellects, to understand and taste the blessings of adversity, and, if you have good-will, it will fill your souls with courage, that you may bear with fruit, pain, trouble and misfortune.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### *VOCATION.*

God assigns every one a vocation—It must be studied and followed  
—Graces lost by not following one's vocation—How one must  
learn it—Precautions.

**S**OME years ago, dear children, you were not in existence; nobody thought of you, no one was concerned about you, save God, Himself, who, from all eternity, intended to draw you forth from nothingness, that He might render you eternally happy in heaven.

At the moment appointed by His providence, He caused you to be born in some country more or less known, some family wealthy or otherwise.

In creating you, He had over each of you particular designs of goodness and mercy, and He destined each to fill a particular position,—He fitted each for a special vocation.

Hence, dear children, you are not free to choose, according to your caprice, the vocation that is most pleasing to you. Your parents, themselves, have no right to establish you therein, for you belong more to God than to those to whom you owe your birth. God alone has the right to assign you a post

in the immense Christian family, of which you are a member. By refusing this post, you would deprive yourselves of the graces our Lord designed to bestow on you, did you endeavor to accomplish his designs, and you would, evidently, endanger your salvation.

From this you may perceive, dear children, that you must study your vocation, and follow it earnestly, when the divine light shall reveal it to you.

"Between the grace of baptism and that of a good death," says Father Valuy, "there is the grace of vocation, which determines and encloses all graces. Hence it may be affirmed, that the formidable moment that decides our eternity, is less, in a certain sense, that of our death, than that in which we decide on our state of life; as the success of a voyage depends rather on the route one has constantly followed, than on the last step he takes."

This deserves most serious consideration, as you, my children, doubtless, understand.

Although you may be still very young, you have, nevertheless, already remarked that the world is full of persons discontented with their lot, who give themselves up to continual regrets regarding their position, which it is too late to change. Let not this surprise you, since, in the age in which we live, God is ordinarily disregarded, when there is question of the choice of a state in life; people choose according to their tastes, their caprice, the enthusiasm of the moment, and not according to the divine will. Trials, difficulties arise; they feel their weakness, their insufficiency; they have not the graces God

destines for those who accomplish His designs. There can, then, be only regrets, weariness, vexation, and discouragement.

You, dear children, will be more wise and prudent; you will consult God before all and above all, when there is question of your vocation, and you will make choice of that to which you are called by His divine will. Then only, may you count on a special grace in dangers, an abundance of consolation in trials, and an ample recompense at the end of life; favors that cannot be obtained by those young persons who choose by chance, consulting themselves more than the will of Him, who, alone, has the right to dispose of His creatures. Let no day pass without offering to God a particular prayer, to obtain the grace of knowing his designs over you. When you approach that age in which parents generally occupy themselves about their children's future, redouble your prayers, and fervently implore the Holy Spirit to direct you in so important an affair. Finally, when the moment arrives, in which you are to make known your determination, take some days to consider yet more seriously what is the will of God.

To do so with profit, you must:

First: Purify your consciences from every stain by a good confession; because sin obscures the reason, fills the soul with darkness, banishes the Holy Spirit and the grace of God.

Secondly: Establish in your hearts, as far as possible, a perfect indifference to all vocations, rejecting every natural inclination, every judgment previously

conceived, every prejudice, holding yourselves ready to accomplish God's will, whatever it may be.

Above all things, impose silence on your passions; listen not to your affection for creatures, your tastes, your relish for the vanities and pleasures of the world, for they will not plead in favor of your salvation.

Thirdly: Retire from the noise of the world and the turmoil of business, to be alone with God in recollection; banish from your minds every thought foreign to the end you propose; establish yourselves in perfect tranquillity; avoid, with equal care, that joy which might elate you, and that weariness which might cast you into dejection. Thus you will be more free, more capable of hearkening to the voice of God, who will speak to you in the holy inspirations of grace.

It would be very much to the purpose to make, in a religious house, or elsewhere, a retreat of several days. Your parents cannot reasonably refuse you this favor, on the eve of your making an important determination.

During those days of recollection you should:

First: Meditate on your last end. Recall to your minds that you belong to God, that you were created only to glorify Him and save your souls; that the present life and its different positions are only means for attaining that end; and that, among those positions, it is our duty to choose that which appears to us the most capable of conducting us to that end.

Secondly: Consult your attraction, that is to say, that secret and interior inclination which God has placed in your soul, and which presents itself to your

mind, even without your suspecting it; it is an almost continual thought that dates from your earliest years, a taste which draws you on, even when you do not think of it. This taste renders everything easy and pleasant; it conquers all obstacles, it renders laborious and courageous those young persons who, apart from the object to which they are attracted, would be the most indolent, the most timid. It may be remarked, that Providence generally gives a person some inclination and attraction for the state of life to which he is destined. There are, nevertheless, some exceptions; but the goodness of God knows how to compensate for this, by some powerful and extraordinary grace. The surest way is to decide always according to the views of faith, and even to resist one's attraction, when it leads to a vocation in which one would assuredly run great danger to her salvation, because of particular circumstances and occasions to be met with therein.

Thirdly: Examine what is your aptitude, what your talents, health, virtue and disposition; submit your reflections on the subject to your director, and consult him as to what would be best for you to do.

It may happen that the decision may be, for you, matter for a very great sacrifice, against which your passions will revolt. Place yourselves then, in view of your eternity, and propose to yourselves the following questions: What would I wish to have done at the hour of my death? What shall I reply, when, on the day of judgment, God will reproach me for having resisted his will? How can I hope to be saved if

I choose another path than that marked out by God for me? Ought not I, if I resist the divine will, to fear everything from the demon, my passions, my own weakness? . . . . .

Answer these questions frankly; do not deceive yourselves; see, by the light of grace, which is the surest way, and hesitate not; your eternity depends on your choice.

There are many young girls who have no settled ideas, who are, as it were, always in doubt; who, in a word, know not how to make a choice. There are others, on the contrary, who easily come to a determination, but alter it just as easily; they are as variable as times, places, occasions and persons; sometimes the slightest contradiction will cause them to break through a determination already taken. This is not to act like a reasonable being.

God has given you, dear children, reason and intelligence to be your guides; you should, then, make a right use of them, and employ them to fix your will on good and useful things presented to you, between which you are required to choose. It is not your parents, your relations or friends, who have to examine and decide for you, where there is question of your vocation; their advice may be useful to you; listen to it, and see how far it may be good to follow it. If you be called to a life in the world, follow, as far as possible, in the choice of an establishment, the desires of your parents, and second their views, which are always for your greater good. God attaches a particular blessing to this

filial submission. But it is you who must decide, after having prayed and reflected much before God, since it is a thing that regards yourselves alone, the consequences of which you will have to bear, not only in the present life, but even in eternity.

If your parents, as it sometimes unfortunately happens, allow themselves to be dazzled by a brilliant fortune, and forget that religion alone assures the happiness of a marriage, do not you, dear children, be careless on this point; ascertain whether he who wishes to gain your hand is faithful to his duties as a Christian: this is your incontestable right; no one can deprive you of it. Imitate the young girl whose artless conversation with her mother is given as follows, in the *Friend of the Family*:—

“Mamma,” said she, “how I pity Miss X——! They say she is going to be married.”

“But you should rather rejoice with her, since she is your friend.”

“Rejoice! Ah, certainly not; on the contrary, I sincerely pity her.”

“Nevertheless, she is about to enter an honorable family. The young man is gifted with admirable qualities.”

“Yes, but it is said he has no religion.”

“Alas, my daughter, very few young men have it now-a-days.”

“Well, then, mamma, I shall never marry; I will remain with you.”

“But, my child, I am growing old; when I die, what will become of you? . . . . Listen, my child;

the occasion is a favorable one for revealing to you my secret. M. Jules X——, whose family you know, has asked for your hand; I would be very sorry were you to refuse him. His fortune is much more considerable than yours, but he loves you; he sighs for the day when he can share it with you."

"Mamma, is M. Jules virtuous? Does he attend church? Does he love religion?"

"M. Jules is a very worthy young man; his parents are pious, and he will assuredly become so some day."

"A delusion, mamma, a delusion; M. Jules will be always what he is. Speak no more of him."

"But, my child—"

"But, mamma, I wish to hear no more about M. Jules."

Some days after, a simple artisan, a young man, industrious, but without much wealth, yet, at the same time, good and pious, asked and obtained the hand of this young lady. She is happy to-day; her hopes and desires have not been frustrated. Her husband has obtained an honorable and lucrative position, and he rivals her in the practice of all virtues.

Pay attention to the habits and disposition of him with whom you propose to unite your destiny.

Silvio Pellico, after his return to religious sentiments, wrote as follows: "To the brief follies of the wedding succeeds a sense of weariness; then the horror of being no longer free, the reflection that the choice has been too precipitate, that the dispositions

are incompatible. Thence proceed regrets on both sides, perhaps only on one, injurious conduct, offences, and the cruel bitterness of their daily life. It is, ordinarily speaking, the wife, the more gentle, the more generous of the two, who becomes the victim of this unfortunate discord; she suffers until death!" . . . . .

What a subject of reflection for you, dear children!

When a young man, of a certain class, wishes to unite his fate with that of a young lady whose fortune presents some advantages, there is no part that he will not play, no artifice he will not employ to please her; he sometimes goes so far as to affect the religious sentiments he has not; and the inexperienced young girl hopes to find in him an attentive, complaisant, and devoted husband, a husband really attached to her. But scarcely is the union consummated, ere the mask is thrown off; those beautiful appearances of virtue give place to real defects, which are, for the poor deceived wife, an inexhaustible source of disagreements, pain, and vexation. O, how careful you should be, dear children, to obtain God's assistance at this decisive epoch of your life! Pray much, pray with great fervor. Interest in your cause the most holy Virgin, your good angels, your holy patrons; give some alms, perform some penance, that you may know the will of God, and have courage to follow it. Our Lord will bless your good will; He will enlighten and conduct you; He will not permit you to be deceived in the choice you have to make.



## CHAPTER XV.

### *MARRIAGE AND THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.*

They are not to be judged according to the ideas commonly entertained of them. Happiness of the religious life—Madame Louise, the Carmelite—A young religious of a teaching order—Duties of a mother of a family; the glory she can procure for God—Example of a Christian wife.

HERE is for you, dear children, generally speaking, only two positions or different vocations; first, that of marriage, holy, it is true, yet the less perfect, which is for the greater number; second, the religious life, the more perfect state, which demands more sacrifices and greater self-abnegation, but which also offers more consolations, more means of salvation.

These two vocations are not to be judged by outward appearances. You would be very much deceived, were you to form your judgment from them.

In marriage, you ordinarily see only that freedom which you, alas! love to enjoy; the expectation of the sweetness and pleasure of family life, the worldly festivities in which you propose to join; jewels, new dress and ornaments, flattering promises dazzle you, and are but the veil that hides the care, the anxiety,

the trials of all kinds inseparable from this state, and which you will encounter sooner or later.

In the religious state, on the contrary, you see only its sacrifices, renunciations, and privations; the habit, the cloister, the simple and uniform life, above all, the obedience terrifies you; but you do not perceive, you *cannot* even conceive the peace, the tranquillity, the sweetness of the consolations hidden beneath those severe externals.

Do not, I repeat, form a hasty judgment regarding these two vocations. Act not like certain young girls, who, as soon as they behold the grate of the convent, exclaim, "I will never be a nun!" Behind those grates which so terrify you, are spent, dear children, days most sweet, pure, and delightful; behind them are found, even humanly speaking, many enjoyments; there one lives in the most perfect charity, in the sweetest union of hearts, in the joy of a good conscience:—are not these great benefits? The anxieties, discords, jealousies, noise and tumult of the world, sadden not the lives of those happy virgins who have chosen the Lord as their only portion. They find in His holy house an abundance even of those temporal goods they have sacrificed, and a still greater abundance of the divine grace, the source of an ineffable joy, which the votaries of the world never taste. Behold the reward given, even here below, to those who renounce earthly alliances for the love of God. It is not possible for us to comprehend the greatness of the reward that awaits them in eternity.

Madame Louise, daughter of Louis XV., drawing a comparison between the happiness she experienced in the religious life and the agitations of the court, which, to the eyes of worldlings, seems to hold all that is most agreeable on earth, expressed herself thus to her companions:

“Believe me,” said she, in that tone of candor which carries conviction to the mind, “believe me, I am truly happy, far beyond my deserts; and by coming here, I have gained immensely, physically as well as morally. It is true, that at Versailles, I had a good bed, but on that good bed I enjoyed only a disturbed slumber. I had a very luxurious table, but frequently I had no appetite. Now that I have only a straw mattress, I sleep very soundly. In our refectory, I find only poor fare, but I go to it with an appetite, which gives a relish to whatever is presented me, so that I sometimes scruple enjoying our peas and carrots as I do. As to peace of mind, what a difference! I may truly say, that one day in the Lord’s House has brought me more solid contentment than thousands in the palaces I formerly dwelt in. If we have here our observances, the court also has its rules, far more burdensome than ours; and when one lives at court, one is obliged, despite one’s repugnance, to follow its customs. Here, for example, I go to prayer at five o’clock; at Versailles, I was obliged to play cards. At nine o’clock, the bell summons me to matins; at Versailles, I was told it was time to go to the theatre. One is never at rest at court, where one

for a long time goes through the same round of useless actions. How many beautiful mornings did I lose there! a part in resting from the fatigues, often so disagreeable, of the preceding evening; another part was given to my toilet, the remainder in hearing importunate petitioners. Here, as I sleep all night, I find it easy to rise in the morning. My toilet takes only two minutes, after which I can occupy myself all day in a manner agreeable to my mind, because I feel it is profitable to my soul. Finally, everything around me at court promised me pleasure, yet I tasted none; here, on the contrary, where all seems calculated to afflict nature, I enjoy perfect contentment; and during the year I have spent here, I have asked myself every day, where are the austerities with which they tried to terrify me?"\*

To the testimony of this illustrious princess, we shall add that of a young lady, well known to us, with whom we spent some happy years.

Called from her infancy, by a very special attraction from God, to the religious life, she had, after the completion of her education, a short period of hesitation. The world smiled upon her; she was told that her talents and appearance assured her a most brilliant success, and she gave some credit to those flattering speeches. But, during a retreat, God opened her eyes to the emptiness and nothingness of all created things, and at seventeen years of age, she entered the novitiate of the religious of X——.

\* Life of Madame Louise, by l'Abbe Proyart.

While yet a postulant, she wrote the following lines to a young lady, who had probably asked her for some information regarding the institute she had entered:

"You could not do me a greater pleasure, my friend, than to impose on me the duty of informing you of the kind of life followed by the religious of ——. May I be able to fulfil it with as much pleasure to you, as satisfaction to myself! May I be able to inspire you with a share of the love I feel for this dear institute, which has done me the favor of admitting me among the number of its children! Such is my ambition!

"The founder of the Congregation is a man of God, celebrated for his talent for preaching, and, still more, for his eminent virtues. His first daughters relate with pleasure his sacrifices, and devotedness in behalf of his cherished work.

"The foundress is Mme. de ———, of an illustrious family of Picardy. But it is not her birth that makes her truly great; it is the contempt she has shown for the riches and honors the world lavished on her. This heroic soul, at the voice of the man of God, quitted her country, her family, her rich possessions, and came into a little village, to exchange the ornaments of a marchioness for the simple and poor habit of the religious." . . . . .

The young postulant then enters into the details of the daily exercises of the community; she speaks of the end of the institute, and of the manner in which it is directed, then she adds:

“The distinctive character of the Sisters of —, is a charming simplicity, which renders them amiable to all with whom they have intercourse. Although of different countries, families and dispositions, all seem to you alike; their countenance is calm and pleasant; their eyes, which are usually downcast, have a serenity which gives peace to the troubled soul; their voice is sweet, their demeanor grave, but unaffected.

“Faithful imitators of Jesus, they make no exception of persons, and if they have any preference, it is for the poor and for children. The indigent, so dear to the Heart of Jesus, are the objects of their care by predilection; not one is ever repulsed by them. . . . In giving to nature what it requires for food and clothing, those pious spouses of Jesus Crucified do not forget that they have vowed poverty and chastity; each receives, without choice or preference, whatever the superior gives her, and if Providence permits that some one be forgotten, she esteems herself happy at having an occasion of privation and suffering.”

Mlle. E. B., concludes by these lines, which so truly depict the sentiments of a religious:

“O, how tranquil is the sleep of these children of Providence! No importunate care or trouble disturbs it! Their last thought, as well as their first, is an act of love for God. . . . O blessed state of the religious life! O pure and constant happiness! O sacred chains, which bind a soul to the celestial Spouse! O blessed house! O cherished

walls, which hide me from the world, and separate me from it forever; may my right hand be withered, if ever I forget thee! . . . . God of goodness, God of love, would that I could make thy mercies known to the entire universe! O, how happy am I to be able to sacrifice to thee whatever I hold most dear! For thee, O God of magnificence, I leave the authors of my days, I renounce the society of my family, of my friends, without reserve, without division! . . . O how slight is this sacrifice, compared with the grace of my vocation! . . . .

"Pardon, my friend, the ardor of these sentiments which flow from my heart, it desires to pour itself out into yours, and in doing so, my joy is reanimated. O! could I but induce you to share in my happiness!"\*

Say not, dear children, that such sentiments are the fruit of a passing enthusiasm, and that the wearisomeness of a monotonous life soon succeeds the enthusiasm of the first fervor. There is not a religious, who does not sincerely protest that her happiness, far from diminishing, increases day by day, and that she would still delight to sacrifice herself a thousand times for God, had she not already done so. But I am not surprised, dear children, at your failing

\* Mlle. E. B., writer of the above letter, after a life spent in the practice of all the virtues which constitute a perfect religious, died in 1843, at the age of twenty-nine years. She had been for a year previous to her death, superior of a house of her congregation. They still speak in her community of her angelic sweetness, of her perfect regularity, of her mortification, her piety, her zeal for the Christian education of youth.

to understand the secret of this happiness. God reveals it only to the small number of souls He invites to enjoy it. Believe, at least, what you are told, and if it be not given you to experience it, resign yourself, and abstain from saying contemptuously: I will never be a religious. m

Neither should you say,—considering the pains, cares and incessant anxieties of mothers of families, through a sentiment of selfishness and aversion for whatever is contrary to your love of ease,—that you will never marry. If God calls you to this vocation, would you resist Him? Ought not you to sanctify yourself in the manner most agreeable to Him, and should you refuse to contribute to His glory by some sacrifices? You would, most certainly, be very guilty, were you to refuse obstinately to submit to the orders of His providence, solely that you might remain in that state of idle uselessness which pleases you, for, I repeat it, my children, you are not free to dispose of yourselves; to God alone this right belongs, and Him alone should you consult. All tastes and inclinations, which are but the result of excessive self-love, should count as nothing.

A mother of a Christian family has a most noble task to fulfil; she can do much good, and procure God great glory. It is true, that her duties are multiplied, severe, and painful, and that she often encounters great obstacles to their perfect fulfilment. But, on the other hand, what merit shall be hers before God! The obedience, honor and submission which she owes to him with whom God has united

her destiny; the duty of bringing up her children in a Christian manner, and of providing for their wants and their education; watchfulness over her domestics, the order and economy she must establish in her house, the duty of preserving peace and charity, and of causing God to be served therein;—all this is not very easy, and she requires the special grace of God, for its perfect accomplishment. This grace will be given you, dear children, if you enter this vocation with a pure intention, that is to say, only to accomplish God's will and sanctify yourself; but if you have other ideas, other projects, if you listen to your passions, if you follow the corrupt inclinations of nature, you will have no right to the divine assistance, and your life will, alas! be marked with many tribulations, with great bitterness without consolation, without a well-founded hope for your eternal salvation.

M. de Margerie, in his work entitled, *Scenes de la vie Chrétienne*, relates a touching example, which I shall transcribe here. It will give you some idea, dear children, of the apostolate you have to fulfil in the married state. I regret that its length will not allow me to give it entire.

M. de Margerie heard this touching example from a counsellor of his acquaintance.

"Twenty years ago," said he, "I had a young and charming cousin. She was a very intelligent and pious girl, to whom her parents, who were very wealthy, had given an accomplished education. By a singular anomaly, M. and Mme. Dubord, though

both very pious, imagined that the race of Christian young gentlemen was extinct among us. Their daughter, they used to say, would become a religious, or, should she marry a man like the rest of the world in a religious point of view, he would, most assuredly, be unable to withstand the spectacle of Noëmi's virtues; fifteen days after their marriage, he would become an edifying Catholic!

"Now, the poor child, fervent Christian as she was, had no taste for the religious life, and when she attained the age of twenty, they began to think about her marriage.

"Among the numerous suitors attracted by her large dowry, her beauty, admirable disposition, and charming manners, M. and Mme. Dubord gave the preference to a young magistrate, who, they were certain, would make his way in the world; a man upright enough, but not a Christian, as was well understood. Emilius (such was his name) was agreeable to Noëmi; she found him very learned, loyal, and agreeable in conversation, neither was she insensible to the affection he testified for her. In short, the marriage was consummated.

"At first, all was joy for Noëmi. Her husband rendered her happy, and gave her an honorable position in society; it would be untrue to say that anything was wanting to her felicity. . . . But after this first elation, which, doubtless, proved the moral qualities of her husband, there quickly succeeded cruel reflections. This man, so good, so amiable,—this man who had given her his heart without

reserve, was an absolute stranger to every sentiment, every act of religion. No prayer ever came from his heart or lips. . . . .

"Noëmi, previous to her marriage, had known nothing of the private life of any man save her father, who was very pious. With the affection which she bestowed on her husband, she felt a sort of terror for this existence, in which God had no share, for those thoughts in which there never entered the consideration of heavenly things.

"Sterile regrets belong only to feeble characters. Courageous souls see evil, only to labor to cure it. . . . . Noëmi felt how diseased was her husband's soul, and her tenderness for him only increased. She wept; she said to herself that she had been called to repair this evil, and to this end she devoted the remainder of her life.

"No one can clearly realize the difference that exists between a truly Christian wife and a husband who is irreligious. There are no words to express this difference, or rather, this abyss, the deepest, the most profound that can separate two human beings. Noëmi soon perceived this, but her humility and her love formed a bridge, so to say, over this abyss. She told herself, that if she had been brought up like her husband, she should, probably, be as indifferent as he. She also believed she recognized in him certain happy dispositions for a return to religious truth. To her it belonged to cultivate those dispositions. . . .

"Previous to his marriage, Emilius had never con-

templated living religion, if we may so call it; now it appeared before him in all its admirable splendor. He beheld a woman who never neglected the least of her duties, to whom pleasure was nothing, and God's will everything; equally ingenious in solacing misery, in rendering home pleasant, and in absolutely ignoring, not through a feigned modesty, but through true humility, the qualities and merits with which heaven had endowed her. . . .

“In Noëmi all virtues were harmoniously united, and over all predominated so evidently the love of God and the inspirations of religion, that it was impossible to see her without loving her, and to love her without at the same time loving the Gospel and the Church that had made her what she was.

“Emilius began to yield to the influence of his wife's virtues. . . . Meanwhile, his words gave no evidence of what he felt, but Noëmi, who, with the sharp-sightedness of love, followed the progress of grace in that beloved soul, found her joy increase day by day. On one occasion she allowed this joy to exceed the bounds of discretion. . . .

“From the moment in which Emilius thought he perceived that Noëmi was not ignorant of his interior struggle, and that she was coöperating thereto, at least by prayer, all was suddenly stopped. . . .

“In the rare qualities of his wife, he only beheld a lure to draw him on; in his own merits, the inferiority of which he acknowledged but yesterday, the all-sufficient effort of human reason. The pacific conquest, which Noëmi meditated in her soul, he called

a secret and dishonorable war waged against his liberty.

"This he signified to Noëmi, in no very gentle terms. The latter, ever ready to accuse herself, bitterly reproached herself for having, through her eagerness, been the occasion of retarding what she so ardently longed for. However, her desire to see Emilius return to God became none the less vehement, her prayers for him none the less fervent. . . . Emilius, for a long time took the part of active resistance, a thousand times worse than his former indifference, but after the ill-humor of the first few days, his affection for his wife remained unaltered. After reflecting coolly and dispassionately, after weighing the words and actions of that angelic creature, the slightest suspicion of her good faith seemed to him almost a sacrilege. Regarding her no longer as an impostor, he beheld in her only a dupe, but a dupe otherwise so amiable and intelligent, that he gave himself up to the expectation of perfect happiness with her.

"Two thorns, were, however, at the bottom of this felicity. Emilius well knew that his pitiful self-love, alone, withheld him from what would establish between Noëmi and himself a perfect conformity of sentiments and desires, which would have rendered their happiness doubly great. As to Noëmi, how can we express the grief of the Christian wife, who beholds him whom she loves more than all the world, voluntarily closing his eyes and heart to divine grace?

“This state of things continued for ten years, during which Emilius abated nothing of his obstinacy, Noëmi nothing of her patience. Two children, one of six, the other eight years old, increased remorse on the one side, and grief on the other, for their education had been begun without that harmony so desirable between the father and the mother, on the subject of those great principles so necessary to be imparted at an early period.

“Those who refuse to yield to the gentle influences with which God has surrounded them, are often punished, and, at the same time, saved by some stroke of His providence, which, while ruining their temporal happiness, leads them to finally embrace the only felicity that survives the wreck of all others. Such was the case with Emilius.

“Noëmi’s health becoming somewhat impaired, she was advised to try the sea-air.

“They chose a small port on the coast of Brittany, a retired spot, frequented only by a few of the more sedate class of bathers. They rented a charming cottage, in which they installed themselves with their children. . . . Never had they been so happy.

“This dream of pleasure lasted for a month; then Noëmi felt a slight illness, followed by chills, then a violent fever. The physician pronounced her illness typhoid fever. The patient languished for a week, then the disease got the upper hand, and the doctor declared there was no hope.

“Noëmi had always been faithful to that rule of Christian piety—‘Live each day as if it were to be

your last.' Death could not, then, take her by surprise. Nevertheless, in the first stage of the disease, she called to her bedside the curé of the village, who learned that Noëmi, although perfectly happy here below, was willing to make the sacrifice to God of all the gifts she had received from His bounty, and that she had only one regret—that of dying before she had led her beloved husband within the pale of the Church. The good priest was moved at this generous abandonment of a happiness so rare, and felt confident that God would recompense this resignation, by giving to the wife's death the efficacy that had been denied to her life. He was not deceived.

"The doctor had declared that the patient could not survive the night. The priest, when about to depart, sadly pressed the hand of poor Emilius, and said to him, in that paternal tone which his sacred character and white hairs amply justified:

" 'My poor child, may the good God assist you!'

" 'Do not go, Father,' replied Emilius, seizing that venerable hand and pressing it to his breast, 'do not go. It is absolutely necessary for me to speak with you.'

"They sat down together.

" 'Father,' said Emilius, when he was able to speak, 'I am a miserable wretch. I have been the cause of my wife's death. For ten years I have struggled against my conscience; and God, in order to punish me, is taking from me, her, whose counsels I, through my criminal pride, have refused to follow,

whose virtues I have failed to imitate. . . . . In a few hours my beloved Noëmi shall have ceased to live, my poor children shall no longer have a mother, and eternal mourning shall have taken possession of my entire being. . . . O, my Father, I cannot think of this! . . . . Will you allow me to tell you simply the only consolation I feel in the depth of my heart? I am convinced that God is imparting it to me, that I may not be crushed by my overwhelming sorrow:—I wish to do for my dying wife what I was unwilling to do while she was in life. . . . I will become a Christian; then I may, by prayer, still converse with the beloved dead. I will bring up my children, as she has already begun to do, in the love of God and the Church.’

“ ‘My son, may God be blessed,’ replied the priest, as he made a sign for Emilius to kneel. The latter hesitated not; with many tears and sighs he poured his whole soul into that of the venerable curé. . . .

“Emilius arose, strengthened to bear the blow about to fall upon him, and went to kneel by the bedside of his dying wife. Who shall tell the mysteries of that sorrowful night? . . .

“Scarcely had the first rays of the morning sun begun to penetrate the chamber through the closed blinds, when Noëmi awoke from a prolonged sleep. Her dying eyes shone with extraordinary brightness, and when she spoke, her voice, which, but a few hours previous, had been so faint, had become so clear and distinct, that a beam of hope entered the soul of the grief-stricken husband. In moving words

described his joy at becoming a Christian, while while deploring the happiness which was about to be taken from him. Then grasping at a faint hope, he said:

“‘Dear Noëmi, you are much better this morning. You will recover, and we shall have the happiness of serving God together.’

“‘No, my beloved; the greatest of all happiness for me, as well as for you, is, that you have become a Christian. This happiness had to be bought. God be blessed for having accepted my life as the price of the grace I have begged of Him for the last ten years. To serve God with you, to behold you teaching our little ones to love the divine truths, O, it would be too delightful! I do not merit so much!’

“As she spoke, a shadow fell upon her face, she felt that her last moment was at hand.

“‘Farewell,’ said she, then with the last effort of expiring strength she pressed the crucifix to her heart.

“Emilius uttered a cry; she was dead! For twenty years has he mourned her loss, and endeavored to walk in her footsteps, that he may meet her one day in the heavenly country.”

“In concluding,” adds M. de Margerie, “the old counsellor’s eyes were filled with tears; thus I understood that himself was the Emilius of whom he had been speaking.”

This example touches you, dear children; but do not give way to admiration only, and to sterile sen-

sibility; reflect seriously on what awaits you in the world, and on what God will exact from you. One may, perhaps, have as a husband a man without religion, brutal, jealous or quarrelsome; another, an avaricious, restless man, of gloomy and savage temper; this one may have a husband, prodigal, improvident, fickle and inconstant; that, a man, ambitious, proud, haughty, even wicked. . . . What resignation, what patience, what sweetness, gentleness and prudence, will you require, dear children? . . . . But above all, what piety, what faith, what courage to bear your cross? . . . . Some of you may, perhaps, be called to make great sacrifices to God for the salvation of a husband or a beloved child! If you be truly Christian, if your faith be lively, your charity ardent, you will forget yourselves, will immolate yourselves, to obtain everything from God.

What did not Saint Monica do for the conversion of her husband, and, particularly, for that of her son, St. Augustin? Twenty years of bitter anxiety, of long and painful voyages, onerous expenses, prayers, fasts, almsdeeds, tears, all were counted as nothing, for the obtaining of so happy a result, and she fell asleep in the Lord, consoled, after she had seen her husband and beloved son reconciled to the Church!

Courage, then, dear children, love God with your whole heart, and you, also, shall obtain miracles!



## CHAPTER XVI.

### OF CELIBACY.

This state not to be chosen from purely human motives—Virtues to be practised therein—Saint Pudentiana and St. Praxedes—Other examples—Marie Eustelle, the seamstress of St. Palais—All vocations lead to God and to salvation.

**T**ERRIFIED, it may be, dear children, at the sacrifices which the religious life imposes, and dreading the trials to be met with in the married state, you have, doubtless, sometimes thought it would be easy to avoid both, by embracing the state which holds the middle place between them, that is to say, by living single. Who could blame us? you say; is it not permitted us to enjoy ourselves, free from all engagements, and disburdened from every care?

To this I answer, my children, that this vocation would exceptionally expose to very great dangers, young persons living in opulence, who should voluntarily embrace it, from the motives you have assigned.

What is it to enjoy one's self without submitting to any rule, any change, if not to live the life of the senses, and drag out an idle existence, without procuring glory to God, or being useful to one's fellow-beings? Such a life is unworthy of a Christian; to

desire to embrace it, would be wantonly to throw one's self into the snares of Satan, and stand on the brink of the abyss; hence, directors of souls and experienced persons do not counsel it.

Nevertheless, you will say, we see many persons in this position. I know it, my children, but take notice that, as to persons of your own sex, it is generally those whose support Providence has made to depend on their labor. Now, this necessary labor preserves them from many dangers, to which those who live at their ease are exposed. If, among young ladies in easy or wealthy circumstances, some remain in the world without contracting any engagement, it is usually they who have wished to enter some religious community. Their own ill-health or their parents' opposition, having prevented them from attaining their desires, they have resigned themselves to remain in the world, not to be more at liberty, as you pretend, but to serve God therein, by leading in the world a life something like that of the cloister. God wishes to sanctify those persons in that way; they are destined to edify the world, and, at the last day, their example will prove, that, with the help of grace and good-will, it is not impossible to resist the torrent of the passions and the seductions of the age. We may, then, consider those ladies as being of that religious state, by their desires and by the virtues we see them practise.

In the early ages of the Church, there were not, strictly speaking, any communities of virgins. They remained in their families, and served God there,

without encountering many obstacles. But now that the fervor of the faithful is so greatly diminished, and the world is filled with scandals, they enter, when possible, into pious asylums. Those who cannot do so, live in the world as not being of the world; they pray often, frequent the sacraments, give themselves to works of charity, follow a rule, sometimes very austere, and do not participate in worldly pleasures and festivities.

If Divine Providence place any of you, my children, in this vocation, you should comport yourselves in the manner above described; and, as you will readily perceive, human motives of idleness and self-love have no share therein.

The history of the early ages of the Church presents us two illustrious virgins, who sanctified themselves in the world by the practice of all virtues, and especially, by works of charity;—I mean St. Pudenciana and St. Praxedes. Their grandfather, the senator Punicus Pudens, received St. Peter into his house when the apostle returned to Rome for the first time. This house served as a place of meeting for the early Christians, who came to hear the instructions of the chief of the apostles, and to participate in the sacred mysteries. The whole family of Pudens embraced Christianity.

“Penetrated by the spirit of faith and the humility that accompanies it,” says Mgr. Chatrousse, Bishop of Valence,\* “that illustrious family abased the

\*Pastoral Letter of Mgr. the Bishop of Valence, for the translation of the relics of St. Aria Eutychniana.

senatorial pride before the Fisherman of Galilee and the first disciples who followed him. As courageous as modest, they showed that Christians of all sexes, ranks, and conditions, form but one body, of which Jesus Christ is the Head.

“The two sisters, Pudentiana and Praxedes, granddaughters of the senator Pudens, showed much zeal and charity for the early martyrs. They piously gathered their blood in vases, and poured it into a reservoir or well, dug in their dwelling. This well is still to be seen in the church, built over the very spot where the house of Pudens stood; it is dedicated to those two good and holy sisters; the vessels which they used in their ministry of faith and charity, are preserved on the altar of the church.

“Pudentiana and Praxedes also caused the bodies of the martyrs to be carried into the cemetery, founded by their grandmother, Priscilla, and they themselves were interred near their holy relative, when they, also, had the happiness of suffering martyrdom for the faith of Jesus Christ.”

When the impious revolutionists of France persecuted the priests faithful to the Church, and renewed the horrors and cruelties of Nero and Diocletian, there were, also, found holy young girls, to imitate the zeal and charity of the illustrious sisters, Pudentiana and Praxedes. They provided for the wants of many confessors of the faith, concealed them in their houses, and, by a thousand pious stratagems, succeeded in delivering some from prison and death. One of them, whom I have known, travelled two

leagues every evening on horseback, disguised as a soldier, to carry provisions to a venerable ecclesiastic, concealed in a wood, on whose head a price had been set. During several months she pursued this perilous course, under the protection of Providence, and finally succeeded in saving the holy priest.

Another pious young girl, who belonged to an honorable family, exerted herself, with a courage truly marvellous, during the Revolution, to procure the last sacraments for the dying, and baptism for infants. Through her efforts, no one died in her village, during the revolutionary scourge, without the succors of religion. She gave notice to a priest, hidden at some distance, and so prudently were her measures taken, that the *patriots*\* suspected nothing. She herself carried the infants to the priest for baptism, concealed in a basket and covered with leaves and vegetables. Every Sunday she assembled the servants and pious women of the village, to read for ~~for~~ them the Prayers of Mass, and to encourage them to persevere in the faith. She died at the age of eighty-two years, poor in earthly goods, but rich in virtue. It was our delight to converse with her, during the latter years of her life, and to watch her arranging artificial flowers for the holy altars.

I cannot, dear children, resist the pleasure of presenting you a model of every virtue, chosen from among those who have served God in the world, without contracting any worldly alliance; those among you, who may be called by God to this voca-

\* Name given the impious revolutionists of 1793.

tion, will see that they can attain perfection therein. This is Marie Eustelle, the admirable maid of Saint Palais. *L'Univers* published a notice of her life, some years ago, from which I shall extract a few passages.

Born of poor, but honest and laborious parents, Marie Eustelle received only the education of the poor. Nothing in her early years presaged the favors that God would bestow on her. She was an intelligent child, full of self-love, quick and impatient, to whose caprices her parents yielded with too great weakness. At the time of her First Communion, grace began to speak to her heart, and by fervent prayer she prepared herself for the holiest of actions. The exercise of the Stations of the Cross was particularly pleasing to her; she performed it four times a week, to obtain the grace of making her First Communion well.

This important act of Christian life accomplished, Marie Eustelle was apprenticed to a needle-woman to learn those labors by which so many women are condemned to earn a painful subsistence. In her new position, her fervor rapidly declined; the love of pleasure penetrated her heart; and she gave herself up to a taste for dress, and a passion for dancing.

When she was fifteen years old, the Church celebrated a Jubilee. The priest to whom she addressed herself, in order to profit by the graces of that holy time, recognized the designs of God on her soul, and engaged her to correspond with them. She placed herself under the protection of the Blessed

Virgin, and began to recite the Rosary daily, that she might obtain the grace of giving herself wholly to God. Thenceforward she employed every ingenious invention to please our Lord. She sacrificed to Him her most innocent desires; deprived herself of the most simple pleasures, such as that of gazing on a procession, looking out of the window, fixing her eyes on the bishop when he officiated in her parish. With much greater reason, did she avoid all dangerous pleasures. The demon could not, without jealousy, behold such great fervor. In a short time Eustelle became the talk of the village; everybody had something to lay to her charge; some fault to find with her frequent communion and retired life. She bore all with patience.

After two years of prayers, tears and entreaties, she obtained her confessor's permission to offer to our Lord the holocaust of perpetual virginity. God, as He ever does, responded to this sacrifice by the most abundant graces. Love of silence, retreat and prayer became wonderfully developed in her soul, and the Celestial Spouse she had chosen, soon required of her another sacrifice.

She was poor; she had no share of the perishable goods of this world, yet Jesus inspired her with a desire to vow even more absolute poverty. After having obtained her confessor's permission and pronounced her vow, she set about its accomplishment with a courage, which makes nature shudder and grace exult. She no longer kept more than a single change of the different articles of dress needed by

her, and never had more than one pair of shoes at a time; she never retained any money, so that the necessaries of life were often wanting to her. She might easily have possessed those little objects of devotion, such as images or pictures, for instance, which pious souls love to give and exchange. Many such things were given her, but, in view of greater perfection, she deprived herself of all. She used only the simplest and commonest food, as being the only kind fit for one who had vowed poverty.

For three years she eat only black bread and water, and it became necessary for her superiors to oblige her to give up this practice, which had notably impaired her health. She had made a complete sacrifice to God of the money she earned by her labor. At times, her purse was completely empty, and she wanted even the necessaries of life. "Jesus," she would say, "knows what is owing to me, and He also knows that I am in need;" and she would cheerfully submit to the privations resulting from the long delay of the payment of her labor.

Her love for the Blessed Eucharist knew no bounds. She could not, without the most bitter grief, behold our Lord abandoned in His tabernacle; she would have wished to dwell continually with Him; she remained as much as possible in His presence. To her had been committed the care of the altar-linen; it is unnecessary to say with what transports of love she acquitted herself of her task. Sometimes, she was, even, allowed to prepare what was necessary for the Holy Sacrifice; what triumph,

then, filled her heart! She delighted in that sacristy in which her occupations retained her so long, and called it her *dear* sacristy. How great was her happiness at being allowed to touch the linens that had served for the Adorable Sacrifice! What a glory for her to attend to the adorning of the holy altars! With what joy did she spread on the altar the cloths her hands had washed and prepared! When she found herself alone at her pious occupation, she would, at times, fall on her knees before that door, behind which reposed the hidden and all-powerful Jesus, and leaning her head against the altar, on which the consoling and sorrowful sacrifice was daily accomplished, she would give free vent to her tears, her prayers, her contemplation. . . . .

Amidst these simple joys, her heart had, also, its trials and anguish, arising from that excess of love, of which we can form no idea. She contemplated that jealous door which robbed her of the sight of her Saviour; she would have wished to hold, to possess this Divine Friend; it seemed that it no longer satisfied her ardors to receive Holy Communion once a day. Nothing could be more touching than what she has written on this subject. The following is a passage:

“What will you say of the temerity of my love, and the extravagant desires with which it inspires me? Would you believe that I incessantly envy the lot of priests, to whom is given the power of frequently opening the tabernacle, and so often holding in their hands the vessel of love, in which Jesus is

enclosed? This one thought raises within me a universal commotion. I feel a mixture of happiness, fear, respect, above all, of love:—what do I say—love?—it is an inexpressible transport. Sometimes I am obliged to turn my eyes away from the holy tabernacle, that I may not be tempted to rush forward and press my burning lips to it. The holy ciborium also fills my heart with strange emotion; I there contemplate, with the eyes of faith, Jesus, our love, a prisoner, but I would also wish to be able to contemplate the sacred species in which He is enveloped, as in a mantle of tenderness. At times, I address myself to the blessed spirits who surround the majesty of our God, hidden beneath the sacramental veils, and say to them: ‘It is not for you He is here; it is for me. Leave to me, then, that place you occupy so near Him; why do you take Him away from me? Is it not enough for you to be in heaven, where you contemplate Him in His glory? Give place, I conjure you, to His exiled lover, who asks, as the consolation of her exile, only to approach nearer to Him on the throne of His love.’”

Such were the sentiments of a poor girl whom you, dear children, would, most probably, have passed by with indifference. Kneeling in an humble village church, unknown to the world, distinguished by nothing save the livery of poverty, which you might, perhaps, have regarded with contempt, nevertheless, she was the object of the particular favors of the Most High. During her fervent prayers, God communicated himself to her in an ineffable manner.

Through her modesty and simplicity shone the incomparable majesty of a true spouse of Jesus. Her whole exterior breathed an air of sanctity, which struck the beholder at first sight. Her words were full of sweetness, her language full of purity. Her humility was profound, her docility perfect towards those who held the place of God in her regard. During the last years of her life, when her delicate health allowed her to do but very little work, she required the help of the charitable. God sent them to her, and she thanked her benefactors with a humility and gratitude that deeply moved them.

Eustelle's virtue, formerly persecuted, exercised such an empire towards the last, that every one esteemed himself happy to assist and serve her. Her health became very feeble; the laborious watches,—a part of each night being spent by her in the church in the presence of the tabernacle,—the austerities she imposed on herself, and, more than all, the aspirations and excesses of the love of God, had preyed upon her vitals. Her approaching death being announced to her, she smiled at the happy presage. She expressed a desire, that, at her funeral Mass, all her friends would offer Holy Communion for her intention; and those young persons whom she had excited to virtue by her letters, her encouragement and example, accomplished her touching desire. This lover of our Blessed Saviour quitted this land of exile on the 10th of June, 1842, at the age of twenty-eight years.

The Bishop of La Rochelle had himself been the

director, for several years, of this soul so favored by God. Humble, poor, detached from all things, this simple seamstress was the admiration of the worthy prelate, by the perfection of her faith, and the lights God gave her on spiritual things. This was another proof, that there is no better school of perfection than that of the Spirit of God.

It is in prayer, in meditation particularly, that this Divine Master instructs and forms souls. The young lady whose position obliges her to live single in the world, should give herself to this holy exercise; otherwise, she will be, as I have already said, exposed to great danger of her salvation. You, then, dear children, who remain in this state of life, be pious as Marie Eustelle, and if your fortune dispenses you from the necessity of labor, occupy yourselves with the poor, and the adornment of the holy altars; for idleness will be for you, as for all, the mother, the source of an infinity of sins.

Finally, dear children, do not forget that you are called to procure the greater glory of God, whatever may be your vocation.

Among those whom God will select by preference, to lead the life of angels and live in His holy house, whom He loves, and who are His most precious inheritance, some, voluntary victims, immolate themselves daily by the rigors of penance, in order to appease divine justice, incessantly irritated by the sins of the world; others devote themselves, with all the heroism of charity, to the relief of all kinds of misery; others slowly consume themselves and

offer a continual self-oblation to God, by consecrating their strength, their talents, and all the energy of their will to that work so important—the education of youth. All, in fine, while sanctifying themselves more easily, far from the seductions of the world, serve their neighbor most usefully, and concur to that most noble and sublime end—the glory of the sovereign Creator.

As to you, dear children, who may be called to live in the married state, you, also, may attain this end, and work out your salvation, if, in the meantime, you know how to live in the world, as not being of the world, to use the expression of the Apostle. You will edify your neighbor by your regularity, your patience, your resignation under the trials attached to your state; you will preserve in your home the honor and respect due to religion, and by your authority and example, will lead the members of your family to practise it. Finally, you will bring up in a Christian manner the children that God may give you; you will early sow in their hearts the seeds of faith and piety; those to whom you may afterwards confide their education, will develop those precious germs which God will have blessed, and your example will finish all, by confirming those young souls in virtue. Thus will you concur powerfully, despite many obstacles and continual solitudes, to the great end for which we are created: *the glory of God and our own sanctification.*



## CHAPTER XVII.

### *ADVICE TO YOUNG PERSONS WHO FEEL AN ATTRACTION TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE*

I AM well aware, dear children, that only the smaller number of you shall be called to the religious life; but I also know, that many of those called to this life, listen not to the interior voice that urges them, and are unfaithful to the grace of a more perfect vocation. Such infidelity is a great misfortune for them, since “he who loses his vocation, is in danger of losing his salvation.”

I have said, dear children, that we sometimes find in the world, and even among families pious in other respects, strange prejudices against the religious state. It would not be surprising that you, also, should share in them. I wish, for the good of all my readers, to enlighten you on this point, and to add a few considerations to those you have read in the preceding chapters, in order to show you, that the life of the cloister is not so painful as you have heard or imagined.

You, then, who understand that salvation is, as it were, impossible for you in the world, on account of your disposition and the different passions that agi-

tate your soul; you, who feel that your heart is made only for God; you, whom the Divine Spouse invites to the heroic devotedness of charity; you, who feel the necessity of prayer, of imploring grace for yourselves and those dear to you, who have, perhaps, been long estranged from God; you, in fine, in whose hearts God has placed, from your earliest years, the thought of consecrating yourselves to Him, in those holy houses where innocence finds a shelter,—what do you fear in the religious life? What prevents the execution of the pious design, inspired by God Himself? Alas! it is but, too often, a mere trifle! At your age, one is so easily frightened and discouraged! A frail thread is sufficient to hinder the flight of a feeble bird;—a mere nothing, a trifling sacrifice which you refuse to God, may also hinder you from following the attractions of grace, and, unhappily, retain you in the world.

Dear children, heed not the prejudices of worldlings. They make happiness consist in the gratification of nature; how, then, can they comprehend the sweetness of a life of abnegation, of a perfect life? Their reasoning, their advice, should have no weight with you. Believe, on the contrary, those who have experienced the happiness to be found in the religious life; they will not deceive you. St. Catharine of Sienna, sometimes kissed, in transport, the walls of her convent, because they separated her from the world, and made solitude and recollection easy to her. A holy religious of Citeaux, comparing the riches and honors of the court he had quitted

with the consolations he experienced in the monastery, exclaimed: "Thou hast promised, O my Jesus, to return a hundred-fold for all that one abandons for thy service, and thou dost keep thy word." Another holy religious said, that he would not give an inch of his cincture, for all the empires of the world.

St. Bernard, speaking of the precious pearl mentioned in the Holy Gospel, for the acquisition of which, one must sell all that he possesses, cries out: "What is this pearl of great price? Is it not the religious state, this pure, holy, and immaculate vocation?" "In the religious state," adds he, "one lives more purely, falls more rarely, rises more promptly, advances more surely, receives greater graces; one sleeps more peacefully, dies with more assured hope, passes more rapidly through purgatory, and is more richly rewarded in heaven."

Dear children, if God calls you to this holy state, why do you hesitate? Once again, I ask you, what terrifies you in the religious life? Can it be the privation of seeing, of being seen, of tasting the pleasures of the senses? . . . . . But all these, as you well know, bring in their train, trouble, anxiety, and remorse. Do you fear obedience? But has not one to obey in the world? . . . . . God has not given authority to our sex; we must obey throughout our lives:—as a young girl, one is subject to her parents; when married, she must submit to her husband; this is of precept. Now, I assure you, dear children, that religious obedience is not more painful than obedience in the world.

What do you still dread? Poverty? . . . . But religious poverty is not indigence. It gives necessities, while it takes away the anxiety of procuring them. When one has what is necessary, what more does she require?—wealth? . . . . Riches bring only cares and trouble of all kinds.

Perhaps it is the coarseness of the habit, or its shape, that you dislike? . . . This sacrifice is very slight, compared with the slavery exacted by fashion, and the importunate cares of the toilet. Perhaps you fear that you cannot accustom yourselves to simple and frugal diet? This is the smallest matter, dear children; ere a few months shall have passed by, you, too, like Madame Louise of France, will have found the *peas* and *carrots* of community fare more nourishing than the most exquisite viands.

Do you dread the monotony, the uniformity of the exercises? Ah! did you but know how agreeable is this uniformity, and how quickly it makes the time speed by! So true is this, that religious change the order of the exercises only when compelled to it, and such a change is always, for them, an occasion of sacrifice.

Are you afraid of being given an employment unsuited to your tastes? . . . . When you shall have learned, during your novitiate, the merit of obedience, the glory, the happiness of being occupied for God, and not for yourselves, all employments will be indifferent to you, and you will be astonished at the facility with which you will overcome yourselves in this particular.

You apprehend the danger of falling sick in the community? . . . . Ah, dear children, are there not also suffering and sickness in the world? The whole difference is, that, probably, you would have more care, more assistance, more consolation in your illness in a convent, than you would have in the world, even were you surrounded by your relations and several nurses. These might, perhaps, overwhelm you, at first, with care and attention; but, alas! people soon grow weary of the fancies and exactions of a patient; and,—if I except maternal zeal, which never relents, because it has its source in the ineffable tenderness God has placed in a mother's heart,—will the devotedness of others who attend your bed of suffering be lasting? . . . . But, alas! it is not given to all to have a mother's care in the hour of sickness! . . .

In the monastery, religion, the congregation, the superior of the community, will be three mothers, who will watch near you, and spare nothing for the relief of your sufferings.

But there is, perhaps, a motive for a legitimate fear; *a revolution* in the State! How, in fact, can one resolve to bury one's youth, one's future, one's *all*, in a community, from which one may be again removed, to be cast on the world, destitute of resources?

This, dear children, is as much as to say: "How can we trust to Divine Providence?"

Are not merchants who consecrate their fortune, youth, time, health, and expectations to commerce, in the same condition as religious? May not a

failure, a change in government, leave them homeless and destitute? Have you not often been witness to such occurrences? Are not owners of property exposed to the devastations of floods, of fire, of scourges of all kinds? . . . . Must they, then, refuse to engage in trade, to acquire property, build houses, etc.? . . . .

On this point, people of the world will reply, that every one must choose for himself, and that, were no one willing to incur risk, society could not maintain itself. Consequently, they approve of persons exposing themselves to reverses of fortune, when there is question of temporal gain; why, then, do they condemn those, who, to assure their eternal salvation, render themselves liable to be stripped of the perishable goods of earth?

Dear children, confidence in Providence is the best safeguard for the future. More than sixty years ago, upwards of a hundred thousand religious were expelled from their sacred asylums; their goods became the prey of a cruel and impious government;—not one of them died of want. God, for whom they had sacrificed everything, provided for them in a manner truly admirable; and neither humanity nor Christian charity were wanting in their regard. Do you think that God is less generous, less powerful at the present day? Ah! Providence is a rich treasure of resources and consolations! Cast yourselves fearlessly into its arms; it is governed, excited, directed by the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Can this loving Saviour forget His humble servants, His

spouses? . . . . . Laugh, then, at human prudence, and, like timid doves, take refuge in the ark to escape the deluge; God Himself has there placed an abundance of grain for your nourishment. But, O my God, there is another plea. Some of you will, perhaps, say: "I believe that God calls me to the religious life; I would be very willing to make all the sacrifices it requires, but I cannot resolve to leave my parents; I could never have such *barbarous courage*."

Young girl, whom God wishes to belong wholly to Himself, yet who resist Him, you will one day have this *barbarous courage*, but not for God; it will be for yourself, the world, your passions. Know that, beneath the specious pretext of filial love, the demon hides the snares in which he wishes to draw you. This ruse has been, alas! but too often successful. He employed it in regard of Miss E. B——, that fervent young lady of seventeen, of whom I have already told you.

While she was engaged in retreat, to learn definitely the will of God, the demon aroused in her heart an extreme affection for her family, insomuch, that bitter tears flowed from her eyes, at the bare thought of the sacrifice, and in speaking of it later to one of her friends, she said: "A tempting picture of the joys and pleasures of my home was presented to my eyes; I beheld my brothers and sisters, enjoying the affectionate caresses of my parents; I represented my dear mother as weeping at the thought of seeing me no more; it seemed to me that she

would become ill of grief. In imagination, I beheld the apartments, the furniture of our house; the woods, fields, and meadows that lie around it, and all in such lively colors, that I shed bitter tears at the thought of leaving those things, and, above all, my beloved parents. I acknowledge that it was this which cost me most in entering the convent."

Miss E. B—— overcame the temptation, and became a holy religious.

As to you, dear children, who may meet with the like trial, yield not in the struggle. If you do, God will cease His loving pursuit; He will leave you to yourselves, for He has said: "He that loveth father or mother, brethren or sisters, more than me, is not worthy of me."

Soon, dangerous occasions will present themselves; some flatterer will appear, who will please you by his arts; and you, dear and affectionate creature, who could not abandon your parents for love of the Heavenly Spouse, will leave them without regret, and, it may be, even against their will, for a stranger, an adventurer, a man, destitute, perhaps, of probity and morality! This has happened many times to our knowledge, and we know what have been the regrets, the remorse of those unfortunate victims of Satan's snares.

When a young lady marries in the world, does she not leave her father and mother to live with her husband? Does she not enter into another family, or, rather, does she not become the head of a new family, which must hold the first place in her affec-

tions? This is so true, that no one blames the wife who embraces her husband's interests, even against her parents, when justice is not violated thereby.

Again, no one disapproves the conduct of the young wife, who, to follow her husband, goes a thousand leagues distance from her parents. The latter do not hesitate to encourage her to the step, even though they never expect to behold her again, even though there is prospect of evil days; it is a wife's duty; she must accomplish it. One knows all this; young persons necessarily devote themselves to sacrifices when they accept a husband. How comes it, then, that you, dear child, who are called to the alliance of the immortal Spouse, are less generous, less devoted to that grand and generous Spouse, than your young companions are to the husbands they have chosen? See what is their tenderness, their confidence, their abandonment, for that man, who, but, alas, too often, gives them cause to repent their love and sacrifice! And you, dear child, you hesitate to sacrifice to our Lord some maternal caresses, some testimonies of paternal affection!

Think not, however, dear children, that the love of preference the religious vows to our Lord stifles her filial tenderness. Ah, most certainly are they deceived who dare to advance this theory! No daughter in the world, not even the most attentive to her parents, can equal the affection—that affection which sometimes becomes heroic—felt by the spouses of the Saviour for the authors of their days. In the heart of the heavenly Spouse, the Redeemer

of souls, is purified and vivified the love which leads them to immolate themselves, to crucify themselves, in order to procure for those beloved parents, goods incomparably more precious than those of earth. I shall here relate one instance from among thousands. I find it in the *Journal of Good Example*, the veracity of which no one can doubt:—

Louise Pierrette was born at Bligny-sur-Ouche, of wealthy and respectable parents. From her early childhood, she showed a particular relish for prayer; and the years she spent in the institution in which her parents placed her for her education, served but to develop the extraordinary virtues which seemed to call her to a privileged vocation.

At the age of fourteen, this pious child, who had long nourished in her heart the design of consecrating herself to God, revealed her secret intentions to a cousin who was being educated with her, and begged her to announce her resolution to her family.

Her parents, as the two friends had foreseen, refused their consent, and soon recalled their daughter home. Louise submitted, but at the end of two years, her reiterated entreaties, her increasing piety, and unalterable determination, triumphed over the obstacles that surrounded her.

They consented to her embracing the religious life, yet would, themselves, choose the convent into which she should enter. This was a hospice of charity, in which the religious were not cloistered, and where they retained possession of their own

property. As this was contrary to her desires, she soon returned to her parents' house, and, without their knowledge, applied for admission among the Carmelites.

Being there received readily and joyfully, she thought she had attained the completion of her wishes, and asked to be initiated without delay in all the rigors of the novitiate, and all the austerities of the rule. But a great trial was reserved for her. Her father and mother, learning her determination, went immediately to the Carmelite convent, and imperiously demanded their child, who, on her part, entreated them, with many tears, to leave her in that dear solitude she had so freely chosen. During several hours was this mournful scene enacted within those sacred walls, ordinarily so peaceful. The superior, unable to calm the irritation of a father, who, with threats, reclaimed his child, was at length compelled to close her heart to the young postulant's entreaties; and, after having consoled her in God, she conducted her to the parlor. Louise, with perfect resignation and humble deference, endured her father's reproaches, but her resolution remained unshaken; as to her mother's tears, she answered them by her own. A holy priest, whom she consulted, then advised her to return to her first community, and there await the accomplishment of God's designs in her regard.

Louise submitted; but the efforts she made to conceal the moral suffering caused by her removal from that cloister, to which tended all her desires, that

interior pain, gradually undermined her strength, and it soon became evident that it would be necessary to grant her prayer, and reconduct her to Carmel. In vain did friends appeal to the poor child's father with earnest entreaties; in vain did they urge the strongest reasons to obtain his consent; that unyielding depositary of the paternal authority remained inexorable. Being unable to allege the minority of his daughter, he yielded, through necessity, but protested energetically against the violence done to his intentions, and refused to advance anything for the expenses necessitated by his daughter's change of position.

Louisa patiently suffered this refusal, and, returning to the sisters of the community in which she had been living, she made them acquainted with her difficulties, and begged them to give her, as an alms, an amount sufficient for her necessary expenses. Those good religious, moved by so much humility, vied with each other in opening their purses, and Louise again departed to Carmel, radiant with hope and joy. "I have attained the completion of my wishes," wrote she, shortly afterwards, to the good sisters who had been so generous in her regard, "and I cannot adequately thank our good God for the happiness He has granted me; this happiness I owe to you, dear sisters, under Him. Our house is very poor; we eat our soup without any butter, but I eat it with an excellent appetite; never have viands seemed to me so savory."

Her happiness was, alas, to be but of short dura-

tion! Louise became so seriously ill, that she was obliged to return to her family. There she found, not only a mother's love, but the affectionate attentions of her father, who refrained from making her any reproach, and gave her permission, as soon as her health became somewhat reëstablished, to return to the *Hospice*, the doors of Carmel being irrevocably closed against her.

But Louise, worn out at length by a disease of the chest, and the rude contradictions she had encountered, lay down on that bed destined to receive her last sigh. M—— came, in all haste, at the request of his expiring daughter.

"I have sent for you, father," said the dying girl, "that I may bid you a last adieu."

"But, my child," exclaimed the father, "you are not going to die; you have often been worse, and recovered your health. . . . You will live a long time yet, to be the delight of my old age."

"My father," replied Louise, "do not deceive yourself. My sacrifice is accomplished. . . . In a few days, God will have taken to Himself the child, whom, through excessive affection, as I well know, you have so long refused Him." . . .

At the mournful remembrance evoked by his daughter, M—— felt his grief redoubled. "Alas! it is not life that I regret," continued the pious girl. "I would die with joy, could it be with the hope of meeting you again in the presence of God, but this hope is denied me, and I must bid you an eternal farewell!" . . .

"Calm yourself," replied the father, "you will not die; and if you precede me to heaven, I shall soon rejoin you there."

"No," replied the sick girl, in accents which revealed her profound faith and her divine mission; "do not hope it; the life you are leading will not conduct you to heaven. . . . I had hoped to disarm the justice of our Lord, and to draw his mercy upon you by my penances, tears and prayers; ah! if the sacrifice of my life might still—"

She could say no more; tears and sobs choked her voice. But her last words had cast a ray of light on M——. Throwing himself on his knees by her bedside, he took her hand, and covering it with kisses, he exclaimed: "Ah, at last I understand you, angel of devotedness; it was to obtain your father's conversion that you desired to bury yourself in the cloister; it was for him who was persecuting you, that you wished, despite your weakness, to condemn yourself to the macerations and austerities of penance; it is for me, it is to save my soul, that you are dying—I am your murderer! . . . . But be consoled, beloved child; your sacrifice is not in vain; God, in His mercy, has received it. Your father is a sincere Catholic, and, in all the earnestness of his heart, he swears to be faithful henceforth to his religious duties."

As the dying girl listened to these words, a ray of celestial brightness illumined her eyes, and clasping her hands, she exclaimed: "Thanks, thanks, my God! How have I merited so much happiness!"

Then fixing upon her father, who still knelt at the foot of the bed, a glance full of gratitude and ineffable tenderness, she added: "Now I can die in peace; I feel not the slightest regret, since I bear with me the hope, or, rather, the certainty of meeting you soon." . . . . .

"Ah, no, not yet," cried M——, rising eagerly. "You must live to see that my repentance is sincere. God will grant you a few days more of life; He owes you this last happiness."

So saying, he embraced his child and withdrew.

Returning home, he related to his wife all that occurred. It being Saturday, he concluded by saying: "I wish to accomplish exactly all the promises I have made to our holy child; in future, let not flesh meat, on days of abstinence, be served at our table. Tell my workmen that I wish to speak to them. Up till now, I have neither sanctified the Sunday, nor caused it to be sanctified; it shall be so no more."

The next day, M—— assisted at the Parochial Mass, and, in the afternoon, made to his pastor an humble confession of his sins. He then returned to see his daughter, whose life God appeared to have prolonged, only to show her that He had heard her prayers. She retained the power of speech up to the last moment, and died, speaking of heaven, on the 1st of March, 1855, at the age of twenty-seven years.

The happy father, thus led to God by his beloved daughter's heroic sacrifice, has never deviated from

the path of duty, nor has his constancy ever wavered.

Tell me, dear children, is it true that eternal treasures are preferable to perishable and temporal goods? Is it true that salvation is the most important affair? Well, then, should the young girl, who seeks to procure for her parents these, the only solid treasures, at the expense of her temporal ease and comfort, at the price of continual self-abnegation, and the renunciation of the innocent joys of family life,—should she be accused of not loving her parents? should people qualify as *barbarous courage*, the generosity she displays, by consecrating herself to God in the cloister? . . . . Ah, dear children, what secrets shall be revealed on the last day! Then shall it be known how many parents owe their salvation to those daughters who left their paternal home to bury themselves in a convent, as victims of the most noble self-devotedness, and whom a blind world taxed, perhaps, with selfishness and ingratitude! Then, also, shall it be seen, that unhappy parents have been precipitated into eternal flames, either for having prevented their children following the will of God, or, because those children themselves failed to offer, for the authors of their being, sufficient prayers and sacrifices! . . . .

Courage, then, dear children! Burst, burst without delay or hesitation, the bonds of purely carnal affection, to replace it, in your young hearts, by that celestial charity which operates marvels! Love your parents, but love them in God, and for God;

and should the Lord speak to your heart, saying: *My child, leave thy people and thy father's house, and I will love thee with a love of predilection*,—do not hesitate; respond with a willing heart to that sweet invitation, and say to God from the very depths of your soul: “Behold me ready, O my Lord and my King, to do thy will; I leave all to follow thee: I sacrifice everything in time for thy love, that I may live with thee throughout eternity.”

I am well aware, my children, that it costs nature something to make to God the complete sacrifice of self in the religious life; but in this, there is also great merit. O! how rich, how magnificent the recompense which in heaven awaits the generous soul, who, by a constant fidelity responds to God's designs over her! Even here below, her happiness is unequalled. In proof of this, behold that multitude of virgins, who constitute the glory of the Church; they would not exchange their veil for the richest diadem of earth. Again, my children, could you but know the celestial and ineffable joy with which God fills a faithful and devoted soul! Could you but conceive the delights tasted in prayer and Holy Communion by those privileged spouses who refuse Him no sacrifice! . . . . Animate yourselves with a holy ardor, dear children; delay not to put your hand to the great affair of self-immolation, and we will say to you with the Royal Prophet, *Taste, and see how sweet the Lord is*;—taste, relish the delights of His word in meditation, in the magnificent banquet of the Spotless Lamb, in which you

will often participate, and see, by faith and by love, the infinite treasures of His goodness, the ineffable riches of His mercy, the incomparable beauty of the Heavenly Spouse who has chosen you, who has called you by a choice of preference, and who wishes to crown your fidelity in Heaven.



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